

## The Potters we have met living post-Altered Destinies

*(Ages at the end of AD (April 1997))*

**Albus** (Al)- 17, 7th year Gryffindor, Seeker; son of Ron and Bellatrix; twin brother of Thomas

**Harry** – 18, “The Count” former Unspeakable physically about 18 but about 30 mentally and emotionally

**Hypatia (Tia)Prewett** – 57, lead researcher and librarian for the Phoenix Magical University James Evans Library; married Fabian Prewett; 1 daughter- Melissa

**James Potter**- 38, married to Lily Evans, children: Harry 18, James 15, Sally 11

**James Potter Jr.** (Jimmy) -15, 5th year Gryffindor, dating Ginny Weasley, reserve Seeker

**Katie Prewett**- 60, Head of Pediatric Healing at St. Mungos; married to Gideon Prewett, two grown children (not named)

**Lily** – 38, married to James Potter, spell researcher

**Michael** – 60, Director of Phoenix Foundation, Wizengamot member, Hogwarts’ Governor; widower (wife: Karolina), two grown sons (not named)

**Ron** – 57, Head Auror; married to Bellatrix Black; two sons Albus(Al) 17, Thomas 17

**Sally** – 11, 1st year Ravenclaw; daughter of James and Lily

**Thomas**- 17, 7th year Slytherin; Quidditch Captain and Seeker; son of Ron and Bellatrix; twin brother of Albus

**Tom** – 70, born Tom Riddle; Minister of Magic; married to Andrea Sardannes; son Jonas 39, granddaughter Michele 10

## Chapter 1: Returning Home

*The Man with the Killing Eyes,*

*The Vanquisher and the Redeemer will return.*

*His arrival will mark the start of Dark's Rise.'*

14 April 1997

A large wolf slipped out the guest room at Hogwarts and padded its way silently down the hall. It was early in the morning and the sun was just peeking over the crests of the Scottish Highlands to light the magical castle. Aside from the house-elves, no one else was awake this early in the morning after a long weekend of Quidditch matches and visiting parents. The Potter clan had sat up late in the night reestablishing connections or establishing new ones, in the case of the younger generation.

For the younger members of Clan Potter, the family stories of the adventures of Harry Potter were the stuff of legends. Here was the son, brother or grandfather they never knew, sprung to life from their bedtime tales. If not for seeing some of the stories first hand via Pensieve, they may not have ever believed Harry was a real person.

The older generation consisted of Harry's children, seeing the father they had been missing since 1945. Katie and Michael had been eight years old when their father disappeared. Tia and Ron were only five. Although Tom kept their father's memory alive for them, their only direct memories of the man had been those of children.

The talking and laughter went late as the family tried to cram fifty-two years of events and stories into a single night. Harry drew extensively on his Occlumency training and experience as an Unspeakable to maintain his composure throughout the night.

Harry Potter was back in his correct time, but it no longer felt like the correct place. He kept looking around for Sarah. Harry credited Sarah for helping him heal after being raised by the Dursleys and fighting the war against Voldemort. James Evans may have saved Tom Riddle, but Sarah Underhill saved Harry Potter. Now Sarah was gone in an eye blink that encompassed over fifty years.

Harry never even got the chance to say goodbye.

The wolf quickly made its way out of the castle. Once onto the school grounds, the wolf broke into the ground-eating lope that he could maintain for hours. In a very short time the wolf was entering Hogsmeade. Most of the buildings were the same as in 1945, but subtle differences talked about the passage of time.

None of the villagers noticed the passing of the wolf in the early morning gloom. The various shopkeepers and bar staff in the village were probably more tired than the students after the Parents Weekend. The air held the stillness often found in the early mornings; a sense of waiting.

The wolf approached a modest home that no one in the village knew was there. It sat in a prime location on the edge of the village. The garden was neatly maintained with a Quidditch pitch in the back garden, but none of the regular village residents ever recognized its existence. The house had sat under the Fidelius Charm since early in the war against Grindelwald.

The wolf assumed human form just inside the garden gate that marked the edge of the charm's perimeter. It looked different from the last time he had stood here. Landscaping and other changes marked the passage of the years.

James Evans, the once and future Harry Potter, stood staring at the first house he truly called home for several minutes. He felt.... numb.

Harry walked slowly to the front door that opened at his touch. The house inside was much different than he remembered it. While the outside was only slightly different, the inside had changed significantly. Harry stepped into his living room. The magically expanded room was more than twice as large as the last time Harry stood here. Harry guessed the need to allow for four teenagers in the house caused that change. The furniture James Evans knew from the 1940's was long gone. The room was still decorated in a way that spoke of his wife's sensibility

A magical self-playing piano dominated one corner of the room. A number of picture frames covered its top. Harry walked slowly across the room, drawn to the wizarding photos.

The first one he picked up seemed to have been taken at Ron's graduation from Auror School. Tom, Albus and Moody stood with Ron and waved as Ron stood proudly holding his new Auror's badge. The next photo was Katie's wedding photo with all of the Potters and the Prewetts. Harry recognized a very young Molly Prewett standing next to Katie while Tia kept whispering something in Fabian Prewett's ear that was causing him to blush.

A sad smile appeared on Harry's face as he looked at the various photos. After all of the stories from the previous day, it almost felt like he had been there. Almost.

As he turned from the piano, his eyes settled on two other pictures. These two sat alone atop the fireplace mantle. Harry recognized one immediately as his wedding picture, but it was the other one that caught his eye. A happy young Tommy Riddle sat between James Evens and Sarah Underhill watching a duel. Rather, Tommy was watching the duel, James and Sarah were too busy sneaking glances at each other and smiling. Harry recognized the photo from his first date with Sarah to the Hogwarts open house.

One final photo caught Harry's eye. It was a photo of an older Sarah smiling gently at the camera. The picture was taken just outside their house as if she was waiting for something... or someone.

Clutching the photos Harry sank to the ground as the grief finally broke through his mental barriers. All men have a breaking point; even the man once known as the Boy-Who-Lived and the most feared Unspeakable in the War against Grindelwald. Harry collapsed at the final realization of what he'd lost and could never get back.

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Harry was never sure how long he sat on the floor of his living room. One may think that after fighting against two Dark Lords, Harry would be used to dealing with loss. In the war against Voldemort, Harry lost Ron, Hermione, Ginny, Dumbledore, Sirius, the rest of the Weasleys

and most of his classmates at Hogwarts, all to one side or the other. The Order lost over ninety percent of its membership. Aside from Harry, only two low ranking members survived. The fight against Grindelwald had not been without its costs as well.

When Harry stepped back in time, he had no assurance that Aberforth's idea would work. Nor did he really care. Death would have been welcomed. Harry felt that to commit suicide would dishonor the sacrifices so many had made to allow him to live. However, risking his life on a forlorn hope to save them was just fine. After all, they deserved to live more than he did. Didn't they?

Two things saved Harry. The first was stumbling across a little boy being beaten in a London alley. Harry's "saving people thing" kicked in and before he knew it, he was the guardian of a very young and defenseless Tommy Riddle. Then he met Sarah Underhill when he arrived with the unconscious Tommy at St. Mungo's.

Sarah stepped in and saved Harry and helped him move past all the death of the war with Voldemort. In her quiet and determined way, Sarah simply loved him and accepted him. Sarah had as much steel in her spine as anyone Harry had met, but it was wrapped in a soft cushion of love and caring. Sarah would never deliberately hurt someone, but she would never bend from what she thought was right.

The war against Grindelwald had not seen as much death as Voldemort, nor had it cost the lives of anyone truly close to Harry, except for Claude. Claude's death had hurt but it was bearable after all the pain Harry had already faced. Sarah and the children worked to balance him and provide a healing influence on the Unspeakable.

Losing Sarah was different from all of the other losses the young man on the floor had dealt with before in either time.

Sarah was his wife and the mother of his children. The young medi-witch had taken a chance on the unknown wizard. As a teenager, Harry felt he truly loved Ginny, but their relationship was formed under the pressure of war and Prophecy. They never had the chance to experience an adult relationship under 'normal' circumstances. James found that relationship with Sarah. By the time the war started, they had a stable relationship with children, a dog and a house with a

white-picket fence. Everything any orphan or war survivor would wish for. As both of these, Harry found that time with his family was even more precious than most could possibly imagine.

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"Dad?"

The soft voice broke Harry out of his dazed state sitting on the floor. He looked tiredly up at the source of the voice to see his oldest daughter kneeling next to him.

"Dad, Mum wouldn't have wanted you to be like this," Katie said in a soft voice.

"I wanted to stay. I would have been willing to give up my magic," Harry mumbled.

"We know that, Dad. After Tia and Ron finished Hogwarts, Mum told us the whole story and how she tricked you with the potion." Katie sank down onto the carpet next to her father. "She wanted to make sure we understood what happened and to help you when you came home."

"A part of me is so angry at her," Harry whispered. "She knew I wanted to stay."

Katie wrapped her arms around her father, a man who looked younger than her children did. The fact that Katie was much older than her father was an odd paradox.

"She knew you would be angry. She talked about it and hoped you would be able to forgive her. She hoped you would understand."

Harry smiled sadly at his daughter. "I do understand." An odd expression crossed his face. "A friend of mine once said I had a 'saving people thing'. I'd have done the same thing as your mother if our positions were reversed."

Harry reached up to brush a lock of hair out of Katie's face. "Your mum would do anything to protect her family but she also enjoyed a

good prank. She would have loved the scene when I appeared above the pitch Saturday.”

Katie smiled as she imagined it. Then she looked her father right in the eye and said, “I am sure she was watching and I’m sure she did.”

Harry and Katie spent the rest of the morning sitting in the kitchen and talking. It was an enjoyable time and allowed Harry to talk through some issues. He suspected it would take him some time to deal with losing Sarah but Katie was a great help. Harry recognized Sarah’s influence on their daughter. It was strangely comforting to see his wife living in his daughter’s actions.

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Tia bounced into the house around lunchtime. “Here you two are! We were wondering where you were.”

“Tia, you are 57 years-old. Do you think you can act your age for once?!” Katie mock-glared at her sister.

An unrepentant grin answered her. “Sorry, too excited that Dad’s back But if you want to keep acting like Minerva feel free.”

Harry had to laugh at her antics. He could still see the energetic three-year-old he used to chase around. “Why do I think you get along wonderfully with Fred and George?”

Her eyes lit. “Two of my favorite nephews. Between them and Ron’s boys, our family gatherings are always so entertaining.”

“Al and Thomas are the pranksters of their year?”

“Fortunately, mostly against each other,” Katie confirmed with a sigh. “They claim that pranking a non-prankster is ‘unprofessional’. They only team up to prank Fred and George or the Marauders.”

Harry smiled into his teacup. “Hmm...wonder if they would like a spot of help.”

Katie frowned. "Don't encourage them! Tom does that enough. Between the four of them, the last time they almost blew up the Burrow." Harry would have believed her more if she wasn't fighting to keep a smile off her face.

"Molly screamed so loud they could hear her in the village even with the Muggle-Repealing Wards," Tia smirked. Katie lost her fight at that and started giggling more like a six-year-old than a sixty-year-old. Harry and Tia joined in.

The father and his two daughters spent the rest of the day going through the house and talking. They told Harry stories about the various items in the house, but mostly just spent time together. Harry knew he would have to go through the house and clean it out but that was something that could keep for another time.

19 December 1997

The stone cap slid away with a grinding noise. Centuries of sand and debris had built up around the edges. The moved stone revealed a black hole that even the mid day Egyptian sun failed to illuminate. The cap stone itself sat six feet below the surrounding sands of the Sahara Desert.

"Drop the 'goat' down," the team leader directed.

A man stepped up to the opening and held a small orb over the opening. It appeared to be a small, brightly colored Muggle beach ball. It hovered for a moment then slowly started to sink into the hole. It faded from sight soon after entering the opening. Five seconds later a bright light exploded out of the hole.

The man at the opening shielded his eyes for a moment. Then he turned and looked up at the attractive young woman sitting atop the sands. "Did you get anything?"

The young woman was wearing a tan outfit with a wide-brimmed hat that looked like what muggle explorers wore a century ago. A few strands of strawberry blonde hair escaped from under the hat. She was looking intently down at an opened book sitting in her lap. She ignored the question for a minute before nodding. "We got it."



"These charms of Uncle James and Remus are brilliant. We have a complete map of the chamber below including the three mechanical traps and four curses."

The tall, red haired team leader leaned over her shoulder to look at the book. "It's bloody brilliant, Melissa. It would have taken us a week to do that using transfigured decoys to find them."

The shorter, dark haired man climbed out of the hole to join them. "The book is an advanced version of their Marauders' Map. The really brilliant thing is that probe. Sirius told me that when they made the map the probe needed twenty minutes with one of them powering it to add the room. This does it instantly and without any external power. So you can be safe while the 'goat' takes the heat."

"So, do you think Gringotts would be interested in purchasing a couple units, Bill?"

Melissa snorted. "More likely they will try to buy you out, Grandpa. This will drastically cut down the time we need to penetrate the tomb."

"Cut down on the risk to us curse breakers too," Bill added. "I agree with Melissa. The goblins are going to love this. They'll buy it."

Harry smiled. "I'm sure James and Remus will be thrilled to hear that." He made a face at Melissa, "And don't call me 'Grandpa'. It sounds ridiculous coming from a young lady that looks older than me." His protest was met with laughter.

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Harry had spent eight weeks in Hogsmeade following his return. He enjoyed spending time with all of his family. His children had grown into good people that he could be proud to call his own. Harry found himself buried in family. Between the Potters and the Weasleys, Harry always found himself getting to know new family members.

That is not to say he did not have a few rough spots.

Lily and James Potter were lovely people, but they weren't really his parents. James was never raised as an only child, not with the

'Evans' brood always around, and his arrogant side never manifested. Without Voldemort stirring the pot, Lily never had to deal with the open Pureblood prejudices seen in the last timeline. Harry felt a bit disloyal to his parents' memory thinking of this James and Lily as his parents.

Lily seemed to understand Harry's issues immediately without him having to voice it. With only a smile she told him she accepted his concerns. She treated Harry as a fully adult member of the family, even if he was genetically her son. James was oblivious to the whole situation. Having grown up with stories of James Evans/Harry Potter, James was in awe of his son / honorary granduncle.

The biggest challenge was dealing with the loss of Sarah, Thomas, and Elizabeth. For everyone else, their loss was an old pain. For Harry, it was sudden, unexpected and all at once. He had been prepared to face his own death, not theirs. The days were fine with his family around him. The nights were too quiet and allowed him to realize once again what he had missed.

Tia was the one who finally forced the issue. His youngest daughter told him in no-uncertain terms to take a vacation. She confronted him one night over dinner at the Potter Manor with his children and their spouses.

"Dad, you are stuck here seeing your house seeing all of Mum's things or wandering around here looking like you just saw a ghost for the first time! I think you need to take a vacation. When was the last time you had one?"

"Well, I ..."

"It's been at least fifty years!" she interrupted. "Go relax and put things in perspective. Go see that island Sirius bought in the Caribbean, go visit Chaz, do something, but don't just sit here and try to hold yourself together!"

The occupants sat gobsmacked at Tia's rant. The room was silent for twenty seconds. Then Ron leaned over and murmured to Fabian, "This is why I let her do all the talking when we were kids." He smirked back at his sister's glare.

Fabian smiled innocently, "She did the same thing to me when I was informed we would be getting married." The glare he received promised divine retribution.

Katie reached over and took Harry's hand. "Tia might be lacking in tact, Dad, but I also think she might be right."

That had been the start of Harry's vacation. He spent one more week in Britain before going to Sirius's island getaway. After that, it was the United States with New York City, San Francisco, Hawaii. Then he visited New Zealand and Australia before heading to Cairo, Egypt.

He found a package waiting for him in Cairo. Inside was a note.

*Dear Partner,*

*In partnership with the Marauders, we present the commercial version of the Marauders' Map! We promised a demonstration to the goblins for use by their cursebreakers. A Mr. William Weasley and Ms. Melissa Prewett will meet you at your room tomorrow morning at 9:00. Please read the enclosed manual first.*

*Your Partner,*

*Fred*

*PS: We're sorry Harry, but Aunt Tia threatened us. She scares us more than Mum! She follows up her threats with pranks!*

*George*

Harry chuckled at George's postscript. The Weasley Twins were as irrepressible this time as they were in the original timeline. Actually, they might be worse because they grew up knowing their role models, the Marauders.

The next morning, Harry met Bill Weasley for the first time in this timeline. Without the war in England, this Bill never returned to England to work at Gringotts. He loved his work as a cursebreaker too much.

For the first time, Harry also met his granddaughter, Melissa. Tia's daughter, Melissa, was a tall woman who took a great deal after her great-grandmother Lily. She had the same red hair and green eyes as Lily but her face showed a definite Prewitt influence. There was a definite family resemblance between her and her cousin Bill. They acted more like siblings than cousins act and shared a love for puzzling out the traps and curses found in the ancient tombs.

Now he was watching Bill get lowered into the tomb, whose opening they had just mapped using the new version of magical mapping the twins had provided.

"I found the first ward markers!" Bill called up. "Hold me here. They were right where the Map said they were."

Melissa halted the magical rope tied to Bill. "That's a lot less stressful than when I have to lower him in blind," she murmured.

"So, now he just turns them off?" Harry asked.

Melissa smiled. "No, now the fun part starts. He has to determine the right sequence to manipulate the wards to shut down safely. It's a lot like disarming a muggle bomb."

Harry looked at her in surprise. "I've had some training in getting through wards. It was never anything like that."

"Those were modern wards," she shrugged. "The ancient Egyptians and Babylonians placed some serious curses designed for two things, killing and longevity. According to their beliefs, these tombs and its contents would house and provide for their souls in the Afterlife. A huge amount of effort went into making their magical tombs inviolate for eternity. The fact that the caster's religious beliefs were tied into the structure of the wards adds a whole other dimension to them."

"So, why are we here than?" Harry asked while looking down the hole to watch Bill work.

"Well, Bill and I are here because the pay is great and it's a lot of fun," came her answer. "The International Confederation of Wizards hired Gringotts to do this because of the Muggles. When muggles first

came across an ancient tomb, they tripped a curse. It caused all of the expedition's deaths. The Muggle press called it The Mummy's Curse; even made a bunch of films about it. So, the ICW hired us to locate the tombs, disable the curses, and remove any magic related items. Then we close it back up and leave it for the Muggle archeologists to find."

"How does the ICW pay for this?"

"The goblins get to keep the non-magical valuables. Every so often we leave one 'untouched' for the Muggles to find. Usually those are the smaller tombs without much of value."

Harry looked up at Melissa and grinned. "Sounds like a nice little scam."

"We like it," she grinned back.

--BD--

28 February 1998

"An owl just arrived for you, Harry," Bill called.

Muttering in frustration, Harry called back, "Give me five minutes!"

After a bit more than two months, Harry really found himself enjoying his time in Egypt with Melissa and Bill. Breaking curses was actually a whole lot of fun. It reminded Harry fondly of his First year adventure to save the Philosopher's Stone. It was a battle of wits with enough danger to keep it interesting but without someone actively seeking his death.

"If I had known it was like this, I would never have told Minerva I wanted to be an Auror," Harry muttered as he worked on the last rune.

With a final manipulation, Harry channeled a small stream of magic into the rune. He was rewarded when he felt the ward flicker and die. He smiled proudly at his accomplishment. He collected his tools and made his way out of the tomb and to their base camp.

"Did you get it?" Bill's voice asked as Harry emerged from the tomb.

"Yep."

"Not bad. That was a level two curse. It took me almost three years in the field before I could do that."

Harry shrugged. It was nothing special. His experiences against Voldemort and in the Unspeakables had given him a leg up on the specialized Cursebreaker training his two hosts had been providing him.

Melissa met him at the door to their wizarding tent. She held an envelope in her hand. "It's from Uncle Tom. It has his Ministry seal on it."

Harry took the letter with a smile and broke the seal. Reading it, Harry walked into the tent. "The ICW is holding a meeting in Bern in two weeks. Tom wants me to attend as his 'assistant'."

"But he usually uses Percy as his gopher," Bill commented in a confused voice. "Why would he ask you to go? And why not just as his guest?"

Melissa snorted, "My Slytherin uncle is up to something. He is setting Harry up for something." She started laughing. "Remember the time Jimmy and Ginny got caught snogging in their Second year? Uncle Tom had poor Jimmy thinking he'd violated an old Pureblood tradition and he would have to get married before the school year ended!"

Bill joined her laughter. "Poor Jimmy was ready to die while Ginny sent Mum a letter asking if her new husband-to-be could move into her room that summer! Mum went spare! Ginny was so disappointed when she found out it was only a prank."

--BD--

13 March 1998

The trip to Bern took two Portkeys with a short stopover in Rome. Harry appeared at the Swiss Ministry's international arrival point.

Harry still found it a novel experience to be legally entering a country after all his time sneaking around Europe in the fight against Grindelwald.

‘At least I didn’t have to jump out of a plane this time,’ he thought as he handed his wizarding passport to the clerk.

The clerk examined the passport with a brief glance. “Good morning, Mr. Potter. The British Minister’s party is expecting you. They have taken rooms at the Hotel Bellevue Palace.” He handed Harry a box with Tom’s Ministry seal on it. “They left this Portkey to take you directly to their suite. Enjoy your visit to our country.”

Harry thanked the clerk and moved off with the box. After a wandless check for traps, Harry opened the box. Inside was a dirty Quidditch sock. ‘Cheeky brat!’

A second later, the sock Portkey deposited Harry on the balcony of a lavish suite. He was looking out over a river with a beautiful view. He took a moment to enjoy the view, but turned when he heard someone approaching. He felt a Privacy Ward come up.

“Beautiful view,” Tom commented as he stepped onto the balcony joining his father.

“You have a gift for understatement.”

The two men stood quietly for a moment, and then Tom asked, “How was your vacation?”

Harry smiled as he kept looking at the view. “If you are asking how I am doing, I’d say pretty well. The girls were right. Getting out of Hogsmeade was a good idea. It still hurts but now I can think of them and smile. The travel helped. I went completely Muggle from the time I arrived in New York until I got the twins note in Cairo.”

“I got your postcard from Australia.”

Harry laughed. “Scuba diving on the Great Barrier Reef was brilliant, but I think I would’ve preferred to use gillyweed than wearing those tanks.”

"I also received a report from my American counterpart about a wizard making high speed passes on a broom through the Grand Canyon."

Harry looked at Tom with an expression of complete innocence. "Amazing how these rumors start. Who would have done something like that where Muggles could see?"

That earned a snort of disbelief from the British Minister of Magic. "They have the Yank conspiracy buffs claiming it was a Top Secret US Government test of a 'personal utility kestrel explorer'."

"PUKE?" Harry laughed. "Did you have Hermione come up with that name?"

"Actually it was Andrea, Tom answered dryly. "Ms. Granger has her SPEW campaign in this timeline also. We receive letters and petitions from her periodically. Andrea knew she was one of your best friends before and did it in her honor."

Harry was still chuckling when he asked, "So, what are you up to, Tom? Melissa warned me about you."

It was Tom's turn to look innocent. "Moi? Nothing of the sort. Andrea came with me to the conference. Chaz is coming to visit tonight with his family. Also my son, Jonas will be here with his daughter." Harry had to admit that sounded good.

"Jonas and Michele are actually in our suite across the hall visiting with Andrea right now," Tom added.

Harry looked at Tom curiously. "You've never mentioned Jonas as having a wife."

Tom grimaced as if he'd sucked on one of Albus's candies. "We don't like to talk about her much. She was an American he met whilst on assignment over there. They dated for a bit, and then she disappeared. Ten months later she shows up with Michele, hands her off, and left. No explanations, nothing. Tests showed Jonas is her father. Andrea tried to get him to leave Michele at home with us but



Jonas insists she stay with him.” Tom chuckled. “She starts Hogwarts in September and he is already going through withdrawal.

“Andrea hopes that means he will finally get out and restart his social life. He won’t talk too much about what happened and why. I refused to use my government contacts to find out.”

Harry nodded in understanding. “I can see that. Anything else I should know?”

“Officially, you are here as an aide. I have Percy Weasley here for that really, but I really want you here to observe.”

“Observe what?”

“After we got that piece of prophecy, I started looking for the danger it warned of. Now that you are back it is probable the warning of ‘*Dark’s Rise*’ will come true as well.” Tom paused for a moment. “I’ve had some indications of some activities, but nothing I can point my wand at. You can be in a position to catch people off-guard where they are careful around me as the Minister.”

Before Harry could respond, Tom looked at his watch and said, “ We are running a bit late. We can talk more tonight. Now, let’s go over to my suite so you can see the family. Then, we’ll go down to the main dining room for supper.”

Tom dropped the wand and led the way through Harry’s suite.

“You really have this Minister thing down, Tom. Ordering me around and everything,” Harry teased.

“Albus always says it reminds him of you when I am ‘acting the Minister’,” Tom retorted. Harry laughed in response.

Tom led the way across the hall and into another suite. Andrea was sitting in the parlor with a very pretty, dark haired girl sitting on the couch next to her. Harry noticed the veela traits inherited for Andrea had breed true in her granddaughter. Andrea looked up and smiled when she saw Tom and Harry, but another usurped her greeting.

“Grandpa!” the young girl called out when she saw Tom. She ran up and wrapped her arms around Tom.

“How’s my favorite granddaughter this afternoon?”

Michele gave Tom a big smile. “I’m your only granddaughter!”

“See! That makes you my favorite!” Tom asserted.

A fake pout crossed her face. “By that logic, I am also your *least* favorite granddaughter!”

Andrea had risen from the couch during the conversation. She walked over to Harry to embrace him. “Ignore them. They have been playing the same game for five years now. I at least have some hope that she will grow out of it!”

“Tom had some bad influences on him as a child,” Harry quipped.

The little brunette scowled up at Harry. “Don’t talk about my grandpa like that!” Unlike most Veela Harry had met, Michele was not a blonde. She had thick black hair with almond shaped eyes and a dark tan color on her skin. Even her scowl was adorable.

Tom and Andrea laughed as Harry couched down to face her at eye level. “I was only teasing. Your grandpa and I have known each other for a long time.”

“Sweetheart,” Andrea said, “This is Harry Potter. He is one of your relatives.”

Michele looked at Harry suspiciously. “Are you sure?” Harry bit his lip to keep from laughing at her expression. “He looks a bit shifty to me.”

Harry fell back laughing when he noticed the mischievous twinkle in her eyes. “She is definitely your granddaughter, Tom. Sneaky, manipulative...”

“Hey!” protested a wizard entering the room. “Is someone talking about my innocent daughter?”

“Daddy!” Michele whirled to run to her father. An instant later, she had him wrapped in a hug.

“Hello, Peanut. Pestering your grandparents still?”

The girl gave her father an innocent, yet evil smile. “Yes, I have Grandpa right where I want him!” The adults laughed as Michele smiled cutely up at her father.

Looking down at her, Jonas muttered, “God help the wizards of Hogwarts!”

Harry stood up off the floor as Tom walked over. “Jonas, I would like you to meet your *cousin*, Harry Potter.”

Jonas smiled as he put his hand out. “I have waited a very long time to meet you.” He glanced at his father and added, “My favorite bedtime stories were always the Harry Potter adventures against the evil Voldemort.”

Harry smirked at his son before looking back at Jonas. “It is very nice to meet you too. And I might have some good embarrassing stories to tell about Voldemort and his alter ego too.”

Michele looked up at her father in confusion. “Dad, this can’t be that Harry Potter! He is too young. He must be simply named after the original Harry Potter.” Harry noted that her ‘spoilt little girl’ voice had dropped away in her confusion.

The adults looked at each other in concern until Harry smiled at Michele. “Actually you are right, Michele. They were from the ‘original’ Harry Potter. I just like to keep all the stories so no one messes them up.”

Michele smiled back. “I like that. Aunt Tia tells the stories really well. I keep asking her to write them down. Dad says they are stories only for the family but I think they would be really popular! Even more than Gilderoy Lockhart’s books!”

Occlumency allowed Harry to simply smile at Michele’s assertion rather than laugh as he wanted to. “You think so?”

The eleven-year-old witch nodded. "It is just as believable as the two Lockhart books Grandmum let me read. Although I never understood why the Headmaster in Harry's stories let all that stuff happen to Harry."

Harry smiled at her comment. "I'm sure Harry wished he could have asked him."

"Michele darling," Andrea called, "why don't you come over here with me so we can leave the men to their boring talk. Tell me about buying your things for school."

"She's a piece of work," Harry said with a smile once Michele left earshot.

Jonas grinned. "She takes in stuff like a sponge and is very mature for her age, but loves to play the innocent little girl. I think she does it so people underestimate her."

"Sounds like a new addition to Slytherin House to me," the Heir of Slytherin commented.

"Unless she decided to talk the Hat into putting her into one of the other Houses," Jonas replied with a grin. "That way people keep underestimating her. A Slytherin in Hufflepuff clothing maybe..."

The three men all laughed at the image. They moved out onto the balcony and continued talking. Over the next hour, Harry enjoyed getting to know Jonas. They shared some stories and talked Quidditch until Andrea came to remind them about dinner.

It was only with a small pang that Harry thought about how much Sarah would have enjoyed Jonas and Michele.

--BD--

Tom led the procession down from the suite to the hotel's main dining room. Harry and Jonas followed behind him while exchanging stories about Tom and Michele's childhoods. The young girl in question was happily chatting with her grandmother about her upcoming trip to Hogwarts.

Just outside the dining room, they ran into a flustered looking Percy Weasley. He looked relieved when he spotted Tom leading the procession.

“Oh Minister, Thank Merlin you are finally here!”

Tom smiled at his aide and made a soothing gesture. “Relax Percy. What is the problem?”

“Sir, the French and Bulgarian delegations are bickering over the most ridiculous things! Headmaster Dumbledore is not here yet to control these things! What are we going to do!” Harry and Jonas shared an amused glance while Percy stood wringing his hands.

Tom grimaced. “I’ll go talk to them. Is Sardennes in there too?”

Percy nodded, “Yes, Minister. He is arguing with the new Bulgarian Minister of Magic. Oh, please hurry Minister! It is such a mess.”

Tom put a calming hand on Percy’s shoulder and turned to his snickering father and son. “Take Andrea and Michele to our table while I deal with this.” Noting their amused expressions, Tom sneered, “Try not to have too much fun with this.” Tom entered the dining room followed by their mocking laughter.

After a moment, they stepped into the dining room and made their way over to the maitre de. Jonas spoke briefly to the man who gestured and started leading them to a table.

They were halfway there when Harry whispered into Andrea’s ear. “Why is your cousin arguing with the *French* Minister?”

Andrea followed his gaze for a moment and shook her head. “But, he is not arguing with the French Minister. That is the new Bulgarian Minister, Mr. Krum.”

Harry looked at her in horror before turning back to the arguing pair Tom was attempting to settle. The Bulgarian’s name was only a mild shock. The bigger shock was he seemed to be looking at a slightly older version of his friend, Claude Delacour.

“Oh look.” Andrea gestured, “Here comes the French Minister, Monsieur Laurent Delacour now.”

Harry’s glance shot over to a shorter, plump man with a little pointed beard entered the room. He seemed to be amused by the scene in front of him judging by the smile and his body language as he approached the group.

Harry watched the French Minister walk up and shake Tom and the Bulgarian Minister’s hands. The three Ministers started talking quietly and the situation seemed to settle.

Tearing his gaze away, Harry asked, “Andrea, do you happen to know the Bulgarian Minister’s first name?”

“Yes, I believe it is Alan.”

Harry turned back to stare at the Ministers again.

“Oh, bugger!”

## Chapter 2 – Foreign Relations

“Oh, bugger.”

“That kind of language is not appropriate in a place such as this, my young friend.”

Harry ignored the comment as he turned to the speaker. “Albus, do you know much about...” He stopped his comment to ask, “Albus, are you okay?”

Dumbledore smiled, “Just a bit tired, Harry. The end of the school year is always a most busy time for me. Not only are OWLS and NEWTS being held, but we also have all the planning for next year.”

The Headmaster gave Harry a speculative look. “Speaking of which, my Defense Against the Dark Arts professor has announced his plan to travel to Africa next fall to study nundu.” At Harry’s raised eyebrow, he added, “I can give you your old office back.”

Harry waved that off. “We’ll talk about that later.” He glanced over to where Tom was trying to placate the French and Bulgarian Ministers. Standing behind his minister, Alajos Sardonnos was giving his cousin’s husband a Snape-like sneer for his efforts.

“What do you know about the Bulgarian Minister?”

“Alan Krum?” Dumbledore asked in surprise as he followed Harry’s gaze. “He is the hand-picked successor to the previous Minister. His son is a national hero as the Seeker for their Quidditch World Cup team. They lost in the last World Cup Final, but he still caught the Snitch. The younger Krum was also the Durmstrang champion for the Triwizard Tournament. Mr. Krum was their head of magical law enforcement before his election.

“Why are you interested in the Minister, Harry?”

Harry frowned, “Does he look familiar to you?”

“I have had some occasional dealings with him in the last four years. Why? Is something bothering you?”

Harry ignored the question for a moment. Instead, he asked, "How does he get along with the French Minister?"

"They seem to know one another. I'd say a bit of a friendly rivalry."

Harry filed that information away. "Look at Mr. Krum. Doesn't he look like Claude?"

Dumbledore looked a bit uncertain. "It has been fifty years, but I think I can see it. Do you think it is possible?"

"Maria told me Calude's wife arranged for her to take refuge in the main Veela colony in Bulgaria. So it is possible..."

Jonas had been keeping quiet as he listened to the conversation unfold, but now he spoke up. "Grandfather...er, Harry, do you really think that is possible? Father told me of your friend's death when Grindelwald fell. Is that why you reacted so strongly?"

Harry grinned at his grandson. "Well, Fate loves to mess with me. So, yes, I do think it is possible. Probable even. But what really surprised me was seeing him with the French Minister.

"You see, my friend Claude's last name was Delacour. So I think the Ministers may be half-brothers."

The two wizards at Harry's side looked at each other in surprise. Then Jonas muttered, "Oh bugger is right!"

Harry smirked, "Oh, but it gets better."

**--BD--**

Dinner had been an enjoyable affair with Dumbledore joining the Potters' table. A variety of humorous and embarrassing stories were shared during dinner. Harry noted that Michele seemed to be taking notes on the pranks she heard.

Albus had them all laughing telling an amusing story from earlier in the week when a certain Jimmy Potter was caught with his girlfriend in a broomcloset by Professor Flitwick. Rather than deduct points, the



Charms Professor made them mildly allergic to one another for a week. Every time they tried to snog or even got too close, they started sneezing and having runny noses.

"It didn't help when the Weasley twins got involved," Dumbledore added.

Tom grinned, "I would have thought they'd have loved such a prank."

"Indeed they did." Albus's eyes were twinkling at maximum power. "They sent a howler during dinner to Professor Flitwick thanking them for protecting their 'ickle sister's virtue from the nasty teenager' and begging him to teach them the charm. Poor Filius broke his arm when he fell out of his chair laughing."

"Poor James and Ginny," Andrea commented with a small smile. "How did they handle it?"

"I believe they have sworn revenge on twins and declared a prank war on them. Ron's twins have offered their services as judges."

Harry and Jonas laughed as Tom winced.

"Will the school survive that?" Harry asked with a snort.

"Young Al and Thomas have promised me the school will still be standing when they are done. I did note they never promised it would be habitable."

--BD--

It was later in the evening when Harry knocked on the door to the Bulgarian Minister's suite. An aide answered the door. He was a bit reluctant but after a moment invited Harry inside.

After a short wait, the Bulgarian Minister entered the room.

"Hello, my aide said you wished to speak with me?"

Harry smiled. Up close, the Minister was the spitting image of an older Claude. He also noted the Minister had only a very slight accent.

“Thank you for seeing me on such short notice, Minister. My name is Harry Potter. I am something of a historian on the war against Grindelwald.”

Mr. Krum nodded, “I am not sure how I can help you. My country was not a primary player in that war. But please, be seated.” The Minister gestured at the couch as he sat in a chair.

Harry took the offered seat. “I am attempting to track down an operative from the Magical Resistance who worked with one of our Unspeakables. I have a good reason to believe she took refuge in one of your Veela colonies after the war.”

Mr. Krum looked interested. “That is possible. We received many magical German refugees in those days.” He looked at Harry and asked curiously, “Why do you bring this to me?”

Harry watched carefully as he said the next part. “I am not sure what name she may have taken after the war. I know her real name was Maria Raven. I have some information to give her.”

Alan Krum had flinched slightly when he heard the name. He was too much of an experienced politician to react more, but it was enough confirmation for Harry.

“What news could be so important after fifty years?”

“A family matter, sir. I think you will understand if I don’t just share the information with you.”

“Of course, Mr. Potter. Well, I don’t know if I can help you, but I will send your request back to my people. I am sure we will be able to have an answer back to you before the end of the conference.”

Harry stood up. “Thank you for your time, Minister.” The Minister rose, shook Harry’s hand and escorted him to the door.

As Harry was about to open the door, he turned back to the Minister. “One last thing, sir. If you do find Ms. Raven and she is concerned about my authenticity, please tell her I bring word from her son’s godfather.”

Harry could see that one went home as he opened the door and left.

--BD--

14 March 1998

Harry spent the next day sitting in a chair behind Tom and next to Percy Weasley. The opening day's debate dealt with the impact of Muggles on the natural preserves of magical creatures.

Harry found the topic ironic. It seemed that the Muggle environmental efforts were attempting to restore areas that appeared to have been destroyed by foresting, strip mining and other commercial endeavors. The Muggles were pushing for the areas to 'recovered'.

The problem was many of those areas were in fact preserved habitats for magical flora and fauna. Protected by wards similar to the ones that made Hogwarts and other magical buildings seem to be abandoned ruins, the preserves appeared barren. Huge magical preserves could also be found in northern Africa inside what Muggles saw as the Sahara Dessert.

The debate did not capture much of Harry's interest. Instead, he observed the French and Bulgarian delegations. Mr. Krum stared at Harry several times during the day's sessions but never attempted to talk to Harry directly. The Minister also received several messages that he dashed off replies to before returning his attention to the meeting.

In comparison, the French delegation never looked in Harry's direction once. Harry assumed that meant Alan Krum did not share any information with Laurent Delacour. And aside from a single note that he absently read, the Minister paid the ICW session his full attention.

Harry decided that international politics were not the field for him. It was all polite conversation, subtle innuendo and deals, with very little of any apparent substance getting accomplished. Like the Muggle United Nations, the much older International Confederation of Wizards lacked any real ability to enforce its decisions. It really

depended on the peer pressure of the other nations to affect any changes.

Percy proved to be an excellent tutor on the events going on in front of Harry. The ICW never affected either of the two previous phases of Harry's life. Each member nation received a number of votes based on the MEI (Magical Efficiency Index) divided by the magical population of the country.

Harry had never heard of the MEI before. Percy explained each OWL was worth 1 MEI point and each NEWT was worth two. Therefore, a wizard with four OWLS and 2 NEWTS was worth 8 MEI points where an untrained wizard received no points. This forced the magical governments to ensure that all of its population received at least one OWL. The nations with the highest average magical training multiplied by the total number of wizards and witches wielded the largest amount of influence in the ICW.

As the home of Merlin, the ICW founder, the position of Supreme Mugwump was traditionally given to the Head Warlock of the British MoM. Although purely a non-voting role, the Supreme Mugwump wielded significant moral authority and helped set the conference agendas. Harry snorted when he realized Albus was truly in his element here working with the various delegations. He obviously enjoyed the debate and small compromises going on all around him.

By the lunch break, Harry was ready to start a duel just to break up the monotony. Even his time undercover as a 'guest' laborer in Germany was much more enjoyable than this one morning.

Relief came half way through lunch when a recognizable figure approached Harry. It was Victor Krum. The Quiddich World Cup star and Triwizard Champion walked confidently up to Harry.

"Du are Harry Potter?" Harry nodded whilst noting that Victor's accent was a bit better than he remembered from his first timeline. "Please come with me."

"Mr. Potter, this is most irregular," Percy started to protest.

Harry motioned him back down. "It is okay. Please let the Minister know I may be a bit delayed for the start of the afternoon session."

'Even with the influence of the Potters, Percy is still an uptight bureaucrat,' Harry thought as he followed Victor out of the dining room.

Victor was an interesting study as they walked through the hotel and towards the elevators. He was obviously recognized but he ignored the whispers and the stares. As the former Boy-Who-Lived, Harry was impressed with the way Victor ignored them completely.

Neither spoke as the elevator took them up to the sixth floor. Victor led Harry to a door Harry recognized as being directly across the hall from the Bulgarian Minister's suite. Victor opened the door and led Harry inside.

Harry was two paces inside when he felt a paralysis curse hit him. A variation from the standard *Perfectus Totalus* taught at Hogwarts, this one locked all voluntary muscle movement from the neck down, allowing the victim to be questioned by his captors.

Victor turned around and stepped up to Harry. Without a word, he reached into Harry's formal robe and removed his wand. Then he stepped back several feet. During this, Harry noted the two wizards coming into the room from the Minister's suite. They moved to either side of Harry and shut the door.

"Who are you and what do you really want with Maria Raven?"

Harry smiled. In his best 'I am an English snob' voice, he said, "This is most improper! May I ask why you are doing this? You could have just asked. This is most rude."

That earned him a cuff to the head from one of the wizards at his side.

"Shut up and answer the question!"

"Can I do both? Isn't that contradictory?"

The cuff was coming again when Harry started to move. A quick bit of wandless magic released the paralysis curse. A wand dropped out of his sleeve even as he ducked under the wizard's slap.

The surprise of their 'helpless' captive suddenly moving and bearing a wand froze the three wizards for a moment. A Banisher caught the closest wizard to Harry while a well-placed kick to the knee incapacitated the other. The wizard howled when his knee snapped and he fell to the floor. It was a mercy when a follow-up Stunner hit him. The Banished wizard had a short flight through the air until he smashed face first with the wall. He slumped bonelessly to the floor.

Harry looked up to see Victor pointing a familiar looking Holly wand he took at him. Harry smiled. "Now, was all that necessary?"

Victor looked a bit stunned at the swift demolition of his two 'assistants'. He tightened his grip on the wand. "I vill ask du once more! What du you vant vith Maria Raven?!"

"That is between Ms. Raven and myself."

As the Bulgarian Seeker scowled, Harry noted that Victor still had a temper in this timeline. "*Kristos!*"

Harry recognized the compression hex as he dodged to the side. If it hit, the spell would feel as if a giant boa constrictor was wrapped around the victim's chest squeezing the breath out of them.

Before Victor could react, Harry stepped next to him and placed his wand against the other wizard's throat. "Now, are you going to stop playing the silly bugger or do I have to knock you out too?"

Harry could see the mix of fear and anger in Krum's eyes as Krum dropped the wand to the floor.

"Very good." Harry backed off a bit and wandlessly summoned his second wand to his free hand. "Please tell Ms. Raven that I would like to talk to her now if she has a moment."

One of the bedroom doors opened and an attractive older witch in her eighties walked into the room. Her hair was now completely white, but

she still had the same blue eyes. Harry noticed her wand held against her side as she walked in.

“Victor, please leave us.”

“But, Grandmutter!” he protested.

Maria smiled gently at her grandson. “It is okay, Victor. I will be safe with Mr. Potter.” She gave Harry a quick glance. “Won’t I?”

Harry smiled a bit. “I did promise Claude...”

The young Bulgarian wizard looked resigned as he walked out of the room. He threw one last, mistrustful glance at Harry that promised retribution if anything happened to Maria before leaving. A quick levitating charm by Harry had the two unconscious wizards floating out behind him.

Maria cast a privacy charm once the door was shut. Then she turned and studied Harry. After a moment, she started to speak.

“When my son contacted me by Floo last night about a strange British wizard asking about Maria Raven I was very curious. My grandson insisted on coming to protect me. I allowed it because I wanted to see how you handled the situation. My eyes tell me one thing, but my head tells me another.”

Harry grinned. “The first night we met was in your pub. You were sitting in Claude’s lap and flirting with all the men. Later, you took me upstairs to ‘seduce’ me. Normally you stunned the men you took upstairs and then gave them memories of a night of wild sex. We played chess instead. After that Claude became your steady boyfriend.”

Maria’s face was pale as she gasped, “Alan?”

“I go by Harry now,” Harry smiled.

Maria dropped into a nearby chair. “How? You haven’t aged in fifty years! Where have you been?”

“Let’s just say I had a little misadventure with a Time Turner,” Harry hedged. “I missed the last fifty years.”

“Why are you here now?”

Harry snorted, “You do remember that Tom Evans-Potter is my son? He wanted me to come here to meet my grandson and great-granddaughter. At dinner the other night I noticed how much your son looks like Claude.”

Maria looked a bit shocked again. “The British Minister of Magic is the same Tom we rescued?” She frowned in thought. “I can’t believe I never put it together. I guess because I never paid much attention to politics.”

“The Thomas Potter with us at Durmstrang was your brother then?”

“Something like that,” Harry evaded in a casual tone. “Speaking of family members, I ran across one of yours recently. Christina.”

“Christina’s alive!” Maria yelled. “Are we in any danger? Does she know I am alive?!”

Harry moved over to her and knelt by Maria’s side. He took her hand and tried to calm her. “It’s okay. Christina is not looking for you. She has lived in England for the last forty-five years as a Muggle. She married a British Army officer and lived as a housewife for years. You’re safe.”

“Are-, are you sure?”

Harry nodded. “Tom has kept an eye on her. Tom had as much reason to watch her as you did.” Maria nodded as she remembered Tom’s kidnapping and training at Durmstrang.

“This is too much! You come back from the dead and bring my sister with you! I don’t know what to say.”

Harry conjured a chair next to her. He sat down with a impish grin. “So, tell me, does your son know his half-brother is Laurent Delacour?”



Maria's eyes narrowed at his tone. "I remember that look, Alan. You'd get the same one when you were planning some fool stunt to annoy the Nazis or Dark Army. What are you up to this time?"

"Harry, please. And I have no idea what you mean. I am just looking forward to the family reunion," Harry protested with a look of innocence. "Christina thought you died when the pub blew up. She took the name Mary to remember you," he added.

The comment about her sister distracted Maria as Harry intended. Maria looked thoughtful for a moment. "The boys grew up knowing of their connection. We raised them separately, but they spent time together during the summers. Claude's wife, Amie wanted it that way. Laurent is five years older, but he was always good with Alan.

"We kept their connection secret. Now I think they enjoy tweaking one another diplomatically for their own amusement. Unfortunately, both of them have Claude's twisted sense of humour," she added dryly.

"You know that when Victor competed in the Triwizard Tournament, one of his opponents was his cousin, Fleur? I would have thought he should have known."

"They know now. They were told after the Tournament. Neither one seemed very happy that the secret was kept from them."

A polite knock on the door interrupted further conversation. At Harry's nod, Maria dropped the privacy charms and called out something in Bulgarian.

A moment later, the door opened. A large, well-built wizard whose attitude called out bodyguard, opened the door and glanced around the room. After a moment he stepped to the side and stood at the side of the door. Harry noticed the man's wand never left his hand.

Alan Krum walked into the room with anger and frustration pouring off in waves. He glared at Harry for a moment before turning his glare at his mother.

"Mutter, what do you think you are doing? Why would you allow yourself to be isolated in here with a stranger with no protection?!"

Maria smiled sweetly at her son. "Hello, Alan. How has is the conference going?"

Without waiting for an answer, she gestured at Harry. "You've met Mr. Potter? Such a nice young man. He reminds me of his grandfather. He is hardly a stranger. His grandfather was your godfather. Why, he is practically family!"

Harry laughed at the variety of expressions battling on the poor man's face. He was obviously still upset with his mother, but the curiosity about his godfather was also apparent.

Maria's face became a bit more serious. "He also wanted to tell me my sister Christina is still alive and living in England."

Alan looked surprised. "I thought she died with Grindelwald! Is she a danger to us?"

"Until recently, she never knew your mother survived the war," Harry explained. "She married a muggle British Army officer named Robert Granger. Her son, Dan, is a Squib that works as a dentist. Her granddaughter is the Headgirl at Hogwarts this year."

"Her-mi-o-knee is my cousin?" a new voice asked in a sick tone.

Harry snickered inwardly. Only one person mangled Hermione's name like that. In an innocent voice, he answered, "Yes, Mr. Krum. She is your second cousin. Or is it first cousin once removed? I can never remember the difference. I assume you know Hermione?"

After their Fourth year, Hermione always protested that the most she had allowed Victor to do was kiss her on the cheek. Harry could remember several entertaining rows about it that he and Ginny instigated.

Now judging by the expression on Victor's face, if her statement was true, then Victor definitely *thought* about doing more. Harry always thought it was weird that an almost eighteen year-old asked a just turned fifteen year-old to the Yule Ball.

Maria shot Harry a dirty look as she walked over to comfort her grandson. Harry smiled back innocently. The old Victor was a good bloke, but this was just too funny.

--BD--

"You are a menace to diplomacy."

"Hello Albus. You are looking better."

Dumbledore took the seat next to Harry. "Would you care to explain why the Bulgarian Minister suddenly left this afternoon's session. And thirty minutes later the French and British Ministers followed?"

"Um... we're preparing to invade the Virgin Islands? We want to capture all of those paper drink umbrellas."

The Supreme Mugwump sighed. "Why is it I can control a room full of diplomats with their egos, and I can't keep you under the same control?"

A cheeky grin answered him. "Because they see Albus Dumbledore, Vanquisher of Grindelwald, Head Warlock of the Wizengamot, blah, blah, blah. I see Albus, the guy who still owes me a hundred and twelve Galleons from a losing hand of poker fifty-two years ago."

Albus's eyes twinkled with amusement at the retort. "It is good to see you back to your old self."

"The girls were right. The year away was a good thing for me. It helped me put things into perspective. Not just losing Sarah, but also the war. It felt really good to not have to face that for a while."

"So, can you tell me now what trouble you were causing today?"

"Nosy aren't you?"

"Harry."

Harry grinned at Dumbledore's pained tone. "I met with Maria after lunch. You do realize that Hermione is Maria's grandniece don't you? And that Laurent and Alan are half-brothers."

Dumbledore looked gobsmacked. "I knew about the brothers but I must admit the connection to Ms. Granger escaped me over the last year."

"Victor Krum was a bit surprised to hear it too."

"Oh dear. I heard they were rather close friends. Well, I am sure Mr. Weasley will be most relieved."

Harry snickered at the thought of Ron's reaction. "That happened here too? Sometimes I swear I wanted to lock'em in a broomcloset until they kissed or got over it."

"I believe the Ms. Weasley and your brother were of much a mind as you. Somehow, Mr. Weasley and Ms. Granger became locked inside their compartment on the Express. A note informed them the magic would not release the door until they truthfully told their feelings to the other."

"The train was at King's Cross for over an hour before the doors opened, I believe."

Harry laughed at the image. "When did this happen?"

"Just after their Fifth year. Lily and Molly threatened to punish them if they didn't release the door, but I suspect they were just as tired of the situation as their children."

Harry laughed so hard tears formed in his eyes. "I'll have to ask Jimmy to show me the memory."

--BD--

15 March 1998

Formal dinners have never been a favorite way of spending an evening for Harry. Memories of the Dursley's dinner parties seen

through the gaps in the door to his childhood 'room' stuck with him. Memories of the formal dinners endured as James Evans for the Phoenix Foundation did little to reduce his loathing of the affairs.

"Do I really have to do this?" he asked plaintively.

"You have five children, eight grandchildren and one great-granddaughter; don't you think it's time you grew up?"

Harry turned to glare at the speaker.

The glare did no good as the speaker added, "This is your fault after all."

"My fault? How can you possibly reach that conclusion?" Harry growled as he adjusted his robe for the fifth time in five minutes.

"You're the one who thought it would be funny to tell Maria that I was still alive in the middle of a diplomatic conference," Christina pointed out with a smirk.

Harry gave it up as a bad job and grinned at Christina. "It was funny. I just didn't think Tom would suggest this little family reunion."

The seventy-five year-old grandmother and former Dark Witch chuckled in an evil fashion. "Just be glad Hermione refused to leave Hogwarts this close to NEWTS! She was asking me all kinds of questions about how you knew so much about my sisters and I."

Harry groaned, "She will not let this rest. Hermione is like a pit bull when she gets her hands on something she doesn't understand."

Christina laughed, "She does rather remind me of Serena with a good bit of Maria's stubbornness to boot. Now, shall we go in?"

"After you."

Christina grabbed Harry's arm and linked her arm through his. "Not likely, Count. You are walking in with me."

Harry guided Christina to the round table that already had several people seated at it. Tom smiled as they approached. The Magical Ministers with their wives and Maria were seated at one table whilst the younger members of the family sat at a nearby table.

“Remember, only you, Maria, Tom and Andrea know who I really am. Please keep it that way.”

“Does that mean you will not be joining us at the main table?”

Harry snickered, “I have been relegated to the youngsters’ table. I will be sitting with my great-granddaughter, Michele.”

“I wouldn’t be too comfortable, Harry,” Christina smiled and whispered as they approached the table. “Hermione may not have joined us, but it looks like you may not be free from questions yourself.”

Harry looked to see Victor Krum glaring at him from ‘the youngsters’ table’. Joining him were Fleur and Gabrielle Delacour. Fleur was glaring at Harry also, but Gabrielle was happily chatting with Michele.

‘Oh, this will be fun,’ Harry thought to himself as they reached Christina’s table.

“Good evening, everyone.” Harry greeted them. “May I present Christina Raven?”

Maria stood up carefully with a blank look on her face. “Christina, is it really you?”

Christina smiled nervously, “It’s really me, Mia. It’s so good to see you again.”

Maria walked carefully around the table to stand in front of her sister. They stared at each other for a moment before breaking down and crying on one another.

Harry stood there for a moment feeling rather uncomfortable. Then he quietly said, “I will leave you alone to get reacquainted.”

Christina and Maria shot matching looks at Harry through their tear-streaked faces.

“Coward,” Christina muttered.

Maria smiled, “How could he ever be a great wizard?”

The sisters laughed as Christina made a little shooing motion towards the other table. Ignoring the look of amusement on Tom and Andrea’s faces, Harry walked the short distance over to the second table.

Michele looked up as Harry sat down. “Harry! You came! This is Gabrielle! She is starting school this year too!” The two little Veela girls looked up at Harry with matching adorable expressions. The two girls looked nothing alike but they somehow it worked.

Harry smiled at the hyperactive eleven-year-olds. “Hello, girls. Are you going to Beauxbatons, Gabrielle?”

“Yes, Mama said I must go to Beauxbatons , but she said if I do well I can go to the summer program at Phoenix!” Gabrielle answered.

“Isn’t that great, Harry? She can be with Aunt Tia and me!”

Michele’s excitement made Harry smile for a moment. Then he turned to greet the table’s other occupants as the girls went back to their conversation. Victor was silently glaring at Harry. Fleur was looking at Harry like he was an offensive peasant that wandered in out of the fields.

“Who are you to come here and disrupt my family this way?” Fleur demanded.

‘Well, her accent has improved,’ Harry thought. ‘She is not mispronouncing words but just a trace of a French accent.’ Unobtrusively, Harry cast a wandless silence spell to prevent the conversation from reaching the other table.

The French witch continued her tirade. “You try to bring out into the open what is private! You are a stupid little boy sticking his nose where it does not belong!”

‘Why does she always call me a little boy?’ Harry mused to himself. A less mature Harry Potter once bristled at the veela’s comments. From his older perspective, Harry could just dismiss it with a glance.

Outwardly Fleur, Harry turned to Victor. “Hello Victor. How are your friends? I hope I didn’t hurt them too badly?”

The glaring Seeker answered, “They are my teammates. Malcov is great keeper. You break his knee with a single kick. Healers say he is out for the season. Dulchuv is fine once Healers done.”

“I’m sorry to hear that. I didn’t mean to hurt them.”

Some of the animosity left Victor’s face. “How did du break the binding hex? I have never heard of that.”

Harry smiled. “Just a little trick I learned. But to more important things, how is the World Cup shaking up? I saw you play at the last one in England and you were brilliant. I used to play Seeker too.”

Harry started to happily talk about the intricacies of playing Seeker. His obvious knowledge of the strategies and skills of the position seemed to thaw Victor out a bit. Slowly, he started to join the conversation when Harry started talking about a modification idea he had for his Firebolt.

Victor liked the idea of putting a propulsion spell on the sides of the broom. This would allow the broom to move sideways and give greater control on turns. Victor’s eyes shone with excitement, his earlier anger forgotten.

His anger was forgotten, but not Fleur’s.

“How can you just accept this stranger coming here and stirring all this up? Grandfather is NOT someone to be proud of! ‘e cheated on my grandmother! With ‘er!” she screamed and pointed at Maria. Victor looked ready to start in on Fleur for attacking *his* grandmother.

Harry was shocked at the hatred he heard in Fleur’s voice at the mention of Claude. ‘I wonder if this is why she moved to England



before?’ Harry also noticed Gabrielle looked close to tears at her sister’s statements.

“Stop it!” Harry demanded. “Both of you,” he added when Victor opened his mouth.

Harry waited a moment and said, “Calmly now, why do you hate your grandfather, Fleur?”

“He left my grandmother for ‘nother woman! ‘e is like all men! A lying, cheating pig! I am glad ‘e’s dead!”

Although more than fifty years had passed for the rest of the world, only two years had passed for Harry since Claude’s death. It was still a raw point for Harry, he could never forget the sacrifice that man had made to assist in the rescue of his son Tom Fleur’s unthinking comment was like salt in the wound.

Harry leaned forward towards the young witch. “What do you know of what your grandfather went through, you stupid little girl?” he hissed. The rest of the table drew back at the quiet words filled with venom.

“Claude Delacour did a very difficult job at a horrible personal sacrifice. He and Maria lived for years undercover in the heart of Nazi Germany. Their relationship was their cover. It was necessity, not desire that drove them to it.

“The Dark Army and Gestapo frequently had them under observation, muggle and magical. They couldn’t act as husband and wife in public and then change when the bedroom door shut. Yes, he and Maria were very fond of one another. Yes, he loved both of his sons. Claude did the best job he could and was a key part in bringing down Grindelwald. Without him, the attack on Grindelwald could have had a much different outcome!”

Fleur’s eyes grew bigger throughout Harry’s comments. When he finally stopped, the young woman rose from the table to flee in tears. Harry started mentally kicking himself for losing his temper like that. He watched as Fleur’s mother followed her daughter out of the room.

“Don’t worry about my sister, Monsieur Potter. She is just being stupid. She grew up idolizing Grandfather Claude. Finding out he was not perfect hurt her.”

Harry looked at Gabrielle in amazement. That was a surprisingly mature response from an eleven-year-old. Then she leaned over and whispered something to Michele that set the two of them to giggling. The brief moment of maturity completely forgotten.

“How can du know all this?” Victor asked in a quiet voice.

“The British Unspeakable that worked with them, he was a Potter,” Harry offered as an explanation. “Let’s just say I’ve seen his memories of the war.”

‘I’ve been around Albus too much. That sounds like one of his answers,’ Harry thought. ‘It answered the question without telling the truth.’

Harry started telling his three listeners stories about Claude and the final battle with Grindelwald. Harry found it rather freeing to tell the stories. Victor and Gabrielle were fascinated to hear about their grandfather whilst Michele was interested to hear about Thomas Potter and the Count.

A much quieter Fleur returned in the middle of the stories. She didn’t speak but just sat and listened to Harry’s tales. After a bit she started to relax and smiled at some of the more amusing tales.

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After dinner, Maria and Christina pulled Harry from his table.

“Thank you for bringing me my sister back,” Maria said in German as she wrapped Harry in a hug. “And thank you for talking to the children.”

“You heard that?” Harry asked in surprise.

Christina smiled, “After you made the young woman run, Tom used a spell to pierce your silencing spell. I didn’t think that was possible.”

“Tom knows the harmonic frequency I set my shield at. He figured out in his Fifth year that by matching it, he can listen in on conversations.”

Christina looked impressed. “He was a brilliant student. Too bad he had to waste his brain by becoming a politician.”

Maria affected an offended look, “My son is a politician.” Then she smiled, “I admit I preferred it when he ran DMLE.”

“Fleur’s mother, **Apolline** Delacour, was not happy with her daughter’s outburst,” Christina commented. “She said the girl was under pressure from her Healer studies.” The tough former Dark Army witch shared no sympathy with someone that couldn’t stand up to pressure.

“I think Gabrielle’s answer was more accurate,” Harry replied. He told that two what had been said. The two witches nodded in understanding.

“Maria will be coming to Hogwarts for Hermione’s graduation. She wants to see the Serena clone that my son had.”

Harry laughed, “Hermione is the brightest students Hogwarts has seen since Tom. If they had been as school at the same time the competition would have been amazing.”

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18 March 1998

The knocking on the door to his suite pulled Harry out of a pleasant dream. After the last two days of boring diplomatic talks, Harry felt he deserved the nice dreams. He vaguely remembered something about a flying dog but it was quickly fading away. A glance at the clock showed it was two-thirty in the morning.

Harry pulled on a dressing robe as he walked towards the door. An odd sense of foreboding caused him to absently drop his wand into his hand.

A quick revealing charm showed Jonas standing outside. Harry put his wand back into the holster as he opened the door for his grandson. He noticed Jonas looked to be in shock.

“Jonas, what’s the problem?”

A pale Jonas answered, “It’s Professor Dumbledore. They said he had a heart attack. Fawkes brought Aunt Katie. She doesn’t know if he will live through the night. Dad told me to get you right away.”

Harry stood in shock for a moment before wordlessly summoning a set of casual clothes. With only a brief moment to get dressed, the two men left for Dumbledore’s suite.

The room was just down the hall from Harry’s suite. A pair of Aurors stood guard outside. Jonas walked past them without a glance. The pair walked directly into Albus’s bedroom.

Albus lay propped up in the bed with a mound of pillows behind him. Fawkes perched on the headboard crooning softly. Katie was sitting in a nearby chair with a small table with potions next to her. Tom was standing silently on her other side.

“Ah, Harry. Sorry to get you up so early.” Albus reached out with a small bowl. “Would you care for a lemon drop?”

“What is this trouble you are causing that gets poor Katie here this early in the morning. Fawkes looks like he still needs his beauty rest.”

Dumbledore chuckled weakly as the phoenix squawked a protest. “Ah, old friend, I fear my old body is telling me it is time for the next great adventure.”

Harry conjured a chair and sat down next to the bed. “What are you talking about? You sound fine to me.”

“Madam Prewitt’s potions have proven their normal efficacy. I feel quite fine. But how I feel and what is happening are two different things.”

Harry looked over at Katie.

"He's right, Dad." She said quietly. "The potions are making him comfortable, but the attack did too much damage to his heart. With a younger patient, I could freeze his body processes and fix it, but he won't survive the shock of the revival process. All I can do is make him comfortable."

"There has to be something we can do!" Harry insisted.

"Harry, you have done enough," Dumbledore answered with a smile. "For the last fifty years I have been able to watch generations of new witches and wizards grow up safe at Hogwarts. You stopped Voldemort once and then risked it all to go back to prevent his rise from ever occurring. Instead, I got a pupil to mentor and a friend. You forgave an old man his mistakes he would have made. Harry, you have done more than enough."

"I would have loved to see you teach again next year. Ms. Weasley, Ms. Lovegood, and Mr. Potter will be Seventh years. Those would have been most amusing to watch," Dumbledore chuckled. "Especially Ms. Lovegood."

Harry felt his eyes filling with emotion. "Ya, Luna's always good for a laugh."

Dumbledore reached over and patted Harry's hand. Then he motioned to Tom and Katie to join them.

"Tom, it was my great wish that I would live long enough to one day see you become the Headmaster of Hogwarts, but your path called you in a different direction. I am ever so proud of you, my boy."

"Thank you, Albus," Tom said simply. The emotion on his face said it all.

Albus's eyes settled on Katie. "Katie, please take care of these two and the rest of your family. Merlin knows what kind of trouble they will get into without me here to keep an eye on them."

"I will, Uncle Albus," Katie promised with a sad smile. "But I make no promises about your godsons."

Albus started to laugh but it turned into a deep cough. Katie moved to hold him up but the Headmaster waved her away.

“Yes, young Albus and Thomas will need a full-time minder to keep them out of trouble. Fortunately their new project with the Weasley Twins will be your problem and not mine,” Dumbledore commented with a beneficent smile.

“Albus, what did you do?” Tom asked.

Dumbldore just winked and continued to smile with a twinkle in his eye.

“Will you at least tell me if we will lose the Alley?” No answer came but the twinkle was reaching blinding proportions. Harry laughed at the classic Dumbledore moment.

The room fell into a companionable silence. No one wanted to talk. Albus closed his eyes.

After fifteen or twenty minutes, Albus opened his eyes and looked at Harry. “It is time. Say good-bye for me. Be well.” Dumbledore glanced up at the crying phoenix perched above him. “Good-bye, my oldest friend.”

With one last smile, the great wizard closed his eyes for a final time.

Fawkes let out a soulful wail of mourning. The phoenix leapt from the headboard and disappeared in a flash of fire, his final sad note hanging in the air.

The three remaining humans sat there in their grief until the sun rose. Then they would have to tell the world that the man hailed as the greatest wizard of the modern age had passed in the night.

### Chapter 3: A Funeral and A Prophecy

#### 21 March 1998 - Hogwarts

An incredible crowd of people attended the funeral of Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore. Dignitaries from around the world joined with former students in the crowd filling the lawn in front of Hogwarts. The mood was solemn and quiet even with the huge numbers of people that filled past the open casket of the great wizard.

Dumbledore had been on staff at Hogwarts since 1929. This was the sixty-eighth school year the wizard had been involved in the education of Britain's magical children. Just over fifty of those years were spent as the Headmaster. Over ninety percent of the current Ministry consisted of Hogwarts alumni and almost all of the nation's Healers were also. Britain's most magically gifted students had passed through Hogwarts, and Dumbledore had touched them all.

A memorial crypt stood in the small graveyard in an out of the way corner of the Hogwart's grounds. Only a few of the long-term staff members or orphaned students were buried here. With Aberforth as his only living family, Albus requested to remain at Hogwarts. Albus's will called for his remains to be secretly cremated to prevent possible misuse by future Dark Wizards. Harry would spread Dumbledore's ashes over his beloved school from a broom.

Aberforth Dumbledore was the first to speak. The old wizard most knew only as the barman in The Hog's Head spoke only a few words. The former Unspeakable was uncomfortable in front of so many people. He told a couple of amusing stories of growing up with his brother and then quietly slipped away.

As the Minister of Magic and a Dumbledore protégé, Tom spoke after Aberforth. It was Tom's words that most of the crowd would remember. Rather than speak as a politician, Tom talked as a family member and colleague of the Headmaster. Many of his stories surprised the crowd and often left them laughing.

"Albus Dumbledore was, at heart, a very large, over-grown child. Anyone visiting his office was virtually force feed various sweets and lemon drops. He was a prankster at heart. Albus had the highest

Transfiguration NEWT grade in the history of Hogwarts. He also set the record for the most detentions for a Hogwarts student who wasn't expelled. That record would stand until 1978 and then broken again in 1996."

The crowd laughed at Tom's comments and more than a few people turned looking for the Marauders or the Weasley Twins.

Tom grinned at the crowd, "Something I did not know until recently is that the Professor kept a diary of all the pranks played during his tenure here at Hogwarts. It includes what happened, how and, most importantly, who did it. I recently received this diary." The grin became a smirk. "Even if you think you got away it without getting caught, trust me, he knew." Tom threw a glance in Harry's direction. "And, yes, that includes pranks played by the staff too."

The crowd laughed again but several of the known, and more than a few unknown, pranksters shifted uncomfortably in their seats.

Tom's speech went on for several minutes and bordered on a roast, but it always remained respectful and fond. Harry thought Albus would have loved it.

The speakers after Tom varied. It started with other Magical Heads of State, followed by academic colleagues, and later friends. The ceremony went on for two hours. Aberforth, in accordance with his brother's will, set a time limit. After the last of the speakers left the podium, the crowd began to filter past the casket to say their final goodbyes.

It would take the rest of the day for the last of the crowd to walk past the Headmaster's coffin.

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Harry stood anonymously within the Potter clan. All of his children, their spouses and their children stood around him. It was a surprisingly large group gathered in one place. Including James and Lily with his 'siblings', Harry counted twenty-three Potters gathered together. For an orphaned boy, that was a huge crowd.



It was comforting, but more than a little overwhelming.

Harry took the opportunity to observe the crowd. He was struck by how different this Dumbledore funeral was from the last one he attended. It felt odd enough to be attending a second funeral for the same man, but the mood of the attendees was what struck Harry the most.

In his original timeline, the crowd seemed scared, jittery. The death of the Headmaster at the hands of one of his own professors and Death Eaters shocked the public. If the great Dumbledore could be killed, what chance did the rest of them have?

Now it seemed more a celebration. Many who didn't know Albus personally stood telling amusing stories or tales of Albus's magical prowess. Fifty years of peace coupled with the Headmaster's slightly barmy public persona caused them to be dismissive. Since his death had no impact on them this time, the people seemed to accept his death matter-of-factly. There were tears, but nothing compared to the grief found the last time.

Harry wasn't sure which group disgusted him more. The 'first' funeral where the people were more concerned with Voldemort and the impact Dumbledore's death would have on their *own* lives. Or this one where the people only seemed to be concerned with being seen and bland conversation.

"Don't be angry, Harry. They don't know what it would be like with Voldemort."

Harry turned with only mild surprise to the speaker. "I know I shouldn't, but they seem so relaxed and happy."

"Of course they are happy, Harry. Professor Dumbledore was able to avoid the Snaggle-toothed Horksels this time. They were really bad before. I think Daddy and I will be able to find the Snorkracks now. They are afraid of the Horksels. Horksels pick on they're almost as bad as the Rotfangs."

Harry laughed at Luna's observation. "Thank you, Luna. I feel better now."

Luna smiled in her dreamy fashion. "That's good, Harry. You were looking too serious, and he's over there, pretending to be Stubby Boardman." Then the clouds seemed to drop from her eyes. "The balance has to be restored, Harry. Too much has changed and a price must be paid. Fate knows you had the best of intentions."

Harry was stunned. A quick glance around showed no one was listening. Harry leaned in closer to the little blonde witch. "What do you mean, Luna?"

Luna smiled again. "The nargles tell me you are going to be my teacher again. Can I still sneak to class like the DA? I sneak around sometimes just for practice when I am trying to find myself. I am not a very good hider. I'm usually behind the couch."

Harry snickered at the purely Luna comment. "Luna, what did you mean about fate? What price?"

A gentle smile crossed Luna's face as the clouds returned. "I hope I get to take the NEWTs this time. Hermione made them sound like a lot of fun. But I don't have a boyfriend to terrorize like she did. Maybe I can borrow your brother from Ginny for a bit. They have to come out of the closet sometime." Luna's smile grew wider. "Bye, Professor Potter. See you on September 1st!"

Luna skipped away before Harry could stop her without creating a scene. Only Luna could make Harry want to laugh and scream in frustration at the same time. In some ways, Luna was the sanest person Harry had ever met... in an odd sort of way.

"You look like you've had a run in with a Lovegood," James Potter commented as he stepped beside his 'son'.

"Luna is unique. I'm never sure what she means but afterwards you can usually see where it made sense from a Luna point of view."

James laughed. "I don't know her well, but Jimmy and Sally are fond of her. Her father is great fun too. Did you know the Potters loaned the Lovegoods the money to start "The Quibbler" over a hundred years ago? Randolph Potter was friends with Rara Avis Lovegood at Hogwarts and lent him the money to buy his first press."

"I never knew that," Harry laughed. "How did you find this out?"

"I was going through the family papers after Dad died," James explained. "We always receive a copy of 'The Quibbler' but I could never find a bill. I guess Rara arranged for the Potters to receive free copies."

"Potter Manor burnt down in my original time. I wonder if I had visited if a huge pile of Quibblers would have been waiting for me?"

"I wouldn't bet against it," James laughed quietly. He paused a moment. "How are you doing, Harry?"

"I'm fine. Why?"

James shrugged uncomfortably. "The Potter women are concerned about you. I was asked to talk to you. Sirius wanted to do it but Moony stunned him before he could come over here."

Harry snorted in amusement. "Sirius's Marauder name should have been Tigger. I never realized how much Azkaban changed my Padfoot before I came here. The man is on a permanent sugar high." James laughed at the comment.

"Lily is really concerned about you. I know you are not really my son. I grew up hearing stories from Dad and my uncles about you. You took on a mythic quality for me. Honestly, I see you more as an uncle. But Lily only was told about you after we lost our first child. It might have been a mistake, but she sees you as hers. Jimmy and Sally are important to her, but you are her 'lost child'.

"I love her, but that red hair is a warning. Lily is set on protecting you and making sure you are happy whether you want to be or not. You being out of the country for the last year may have helped you, but she is convinced she needs to make up for seventeen years of missed mothering."

Harry groaned. "I am about thirty now! I have kids of my own! Hell, I have grandkids and a great-grandkid!"

"Yep," James agreed cheerfully. "You do. You also are responsible for defeating two Dark Lords, took your NEWTs (twice!) and taught DADA at Hogwarts. Doesn't matter. You are her baby boy and need to be protected."

Harry started to protest again but then he started to laugh at the irony. All those years at the Dursleys he had prayed for his parents to save him. Now they were here, trying to 'save' him, and he found it frustrating.

"Why don't you come to dinner tomorrow night? If she sees you in a good mood maybe she will relax a bit."

"And who else will be at this dinner?" Harry asked suspiciously.

"Don't be so paranoid. You sound like Moody." James said smiling. "But no one special is coming. Just us. I don't think anyone else will be at the Manor."

Years of fighting Dark Lords gave Harry a very finely tuned danger sense. It was nothing magical. Just that itch between the shoulder blades many veteran soldiers develop when approaching an ambush.

Looking at his erstwhile Father, Harry commented, "This is going to be ugly, isn't it?"

Prongs the Marauder smiled innocently, "I have no idea what you could possibly mean."

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## 22, March 1998 – Ministry of Magic

The day after Albus Dumbledore's funeral, a press conference was called at the Ministry. It was an unexpected conference. Usually the members of the press are briefed before hand on the topic of the announcement. This time, none of them had a clue.

They relaxed a bit when a smiling Tom Potter-Evans walked confidently to the podium. His charismatic presence always seemed

to fill the room. Behind him walked the Minister's long-time friend and right hand, Edward Nott.

"Good afternoon,

"As you are all aware, Professor McGonagall has been asked to act as Headmistress of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry for the remainder of the term. The professor has accepted the Acting role, but has declined the permanent appointment. Professor McGonagall would prefer to remain as Head of Gryffindor and Transfiguration professor and feels that remains where she will be most useful to the Hogwarts students.

"After careful consideration, I placed my name with the Board of Governors as a candidate for the position of Headmaster. This came after careful consideration and discussions with my wife. Effective July 31st, I will be stepping down as Minister of Magic to take the position of Hogwarts Headmaster. In accordance with our laws, I notified the Wizengamot this morning and I am calling for a general election to be held on September 15th. Senior Undersecretary Edward Nott will be Acting Minister for the forty-five days of the caretaker Government.

"During this transition, I would ask for everyone's patience and to give their full assistance to Senior Undersecretary Nott during this time."

The Minister looked out at the members of the magical press corp. They all looked shocked. With a not-so-innocent smile, Tom said, "Now, I will take your questions."

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## 22, March 1998 – Potter Manor

Harry arrived with a small pop in the entry point of the Potter Manor. It was surprisingly quiet.

"Hello, Harry," Lily said as she walked into the hall. She gave Harry a kiss on the cheek and with a hug. "You are just in time. The elves were just finishing getting everything ready."

"It's quiet," Harry remarked as he followed Lily towards the dining room.

"It's a Sunday night during the school year," Lily laughed. "Wait 'till the term is up and then tell me it's quiet here."

"Speaking of the school, did Tom tell you what he was planning to announce today?" Lily asked curiously.

"It doesn't really surprise me, but he didn't say anything to me," Harry admitted. "I think Albus would have been pleased though. Tom will be a good Headmaster."

"It will seem odd to have a new Headmaster," Lily commented. "Albus was the Headmaster longer than I've even known about the wizarding world."

"We'll adjust. Professor Dippet held the position for almost twenty years, I think, before Albus took over."

"I guess," Lily agreed with a sigh as they stepped into the Dining Room.

The room was larger than Harry last remembered it being. A large circular table fit for twenty people dominated the room now.

"You've changed the room. Isn't that table a bit large for just the three of us?" Harry observed.

A small mischievous smile crossed his mother's face. "We normally have a lot more people here for dinner. Between Jimmy and Sally, their friends and all of our family it seems someone is always dropping in."

Harry suppressed a smile as he saw the trap. "Is anyone expected to just drop in tonight?" he asked.

"Well, no one is ever expected to drop in. They just know we always eat at the same time unless something special is going on."

"Does this count as something special?"

Lily smiled and took Harry's arm. "Of course it does! I know I am not your real mum, Harry. But I hope that a little bit of my Harry is somewhere inside of you. Your mum gave her life for yours." Harry noticed the tears forming in her eyes. "I'd like to think that I could have made the same sacrifice for my Harry."

Harry had dealt with many bizarre situations in his life, but this one was high on his freak-o-meter. How did you deal with a woman that was biologically, mentally, and magically your mother, but at the same time not?

Plus, Harry still wasn't good with crying females.

Feeling a bit awkward, Harry wrapped his arms around Lily Potter as she started crying on his shoulder. He simply held her as she let loose eighteen years of pain from the disappearance of her unborn first child.

Lily calmed down after several minutes. Without lifting her head from Harry's shoulder, she said, "I cursed them you know."

"Cursed who?"

"My horrible sister and her pig of a husband." After a moment, she added, "Their whale of a son too."

Harry snickered and asked, "Why did you do that?"

"After my Harry disappeared, Katie and Tia showed me the Pensieve you left behind. I saw how they treated you. So I went to their house and cursed them."

"You could have gotten into trouble for that."

Lily leaned back and pointed her finger into Harry's chest. "They would have done the same thing to my Harry as they did to you."

"They might have been different without me there," Harry protested.

The finger pointed into his chest again. "Don't give me that, Harry James Potter! I grew up with that creature! Even if you were not there

they still would have been the mean, petty little monsters you knew to everyone else.”

Harry laughed at the fire in the eye of the red-haired, green-eyed bundle of fury in front of him. The little boy in Harry was thrilled to her his mother finally come to his defense, even if it was thirty years and another timeline too late.

“So, what did you do?” Harry asked curiously.

Lily blushed. “Er, Petunia can only tell the truth or her nose grows. Muggles can’t see it, but wizards and her family can. Vernon gets the trots if he yells or deliberately hurts anyone.”

“And Dudley?” Harry asked with a smile.

Lily looked a bit defensive. “He was only a baby at the time. So nothing might have happened.” She paused for a bit. In a near whisper she said, “If he picks on children smaller or weaker than he is, he loses bladder control.

Seeing Harry about to say something, she quickly added, “It wouldn’t activate until he’d done it three times before. And it would fade away any time after he turned eighteen if he didn’t bully anyone in the prior three years.”

“Oh, that’s evil!” Harry laughed. “It’s so perfect. They can control their curses. They just need to learn to control themselves. Thank you, Dr. Pavlov!” After a couple of moments, Lily joined in Harry’s laughter.

“Well, that sounds promising,” James commented as he walked in on the laughing pair. “What is so funny?”

Harry calmed down enough to reply, “I found out that the Marauders were hopelessly outclassed as pranksters in their year.”

“Lily always helped us with some of our more ... pointed pranks,” James admitted with a smile. “I knew I had to marry her by our Fourth year. I couldn’t let a talent for pranks like that go to waste.”

Lily affectionately smacked her husband on the arm



The three Potters settled down to eat. Lily started asking Harry questions about his past as they ate. How did he like Hogwarts, who were his teachers and similar questions.

From a distance of about eighteen years since he first stepped foot in Hogwarts, Harry could tell the stories of his first four years at Hogwarts as amusing stories. James and Lily laughed at the stories of the three First years running around under the Invisibility Cloak looking for clues about Fluffy and Nicholas Flamel. The story about going into the Chamber of Secrets after Ginny with Ron and Lockhart brought both amusement and shock. Third year's mystery of the escaped mass murderer Sirius Black wasn't as amusing but they did enjoy hearing about the Tri-wizard Tournament of Harry's Fourth year.

Lily returned the favor by telling Harry all about their years at Hogwarts. She started with telling how James 'accidentally' turned her hair black in their first Charms class. She had accepted his original claims of an accident until it happened of the third class in a row.

"What happened then?" Harry asked.

James snorted, "I found out not to tease future spell researchers. The next time she found a charm that made me cluck like a chicken for a week."

"Flitwick couldn't fix it?" Harry asked laughing.

"Oh, he could have. But he seemed to think James needed a lesson. He even gave me five points," she added with a smile.

"I didn't know that!" James said in surprise.

Lily winked at her husband. "It was during my detention. We sat and talked about Charms for the entire detention. He gave me the points as I was leaving. He said it was for an excellently cast charm for a First year."

James sputtered in mock indignation while Harry and Lily laughed.

Once they settled down, Lily looked at Harry curiously. "Harry, how do you feel seeing your school friends again but they don't know you?"

"Well, Luna does," Harry grinned, "but I get your point. It's a bit odd. Age wise, I am really ten years older than them. Plus, my friends fought a war with me. We were all a lot more mature... and harder, I guess.

"It's more like seeing my friends' children who look just like them. I realized years ago that if I returned here that they would not be the same people."

James and Lily shared an uncomfortable glance. James frowned at some unspoken direction and sighed. "Can I ask how you feel about Ginny? I know you were dating her when you fought the other Uncle Tom."

Harry snorted at the odd way of referring to Voldemort. Then he shrugged. "This is a different Ginny and from what I can tell, she is in love with my little brother."

"But you went back in time to save her and your friends," Lily said quietly. "You must still feel something for her."

Harry shook his head. "I pang maybe for what could have been, but not really. It was wartime and emotions tend to be more intense. Would we have lasted outside the pressure cooker of Voldemort and his merry band of followers? I don't know.

"Sarah gave me something I don't know if my Ginny could have. I was broken when I met her. She was never a consolation prize after losing Ginny."

Harry quirked an eyebrow at his almost parents. "So, what is this really about?"

Lily flushed as James laughed. "Jimmy was nervous over the holidays about something" James admitted. "I finally cornered him and forced him to talk. It seems he finally realized that the Ginny he

heard about in the stories of you was the same girl he has been madly chasing for the last five years.

"I think he always knew intellectually, but you coming home drove that fact in."

"He was afraid I would fight to get her back?" Harry asked.

James smirked, "Something like that. He was convinced he would win, of course, but you've been his idol for years. He and I both heard Harry Potter stories from our fathers.

Harry chuckled at the thought of Jimmy's nervousness. "I'll have to send him a Howler with my permission."

"I won't say what I am giving permission for," he added before the Potters could protest, "but I am sure I can word it appropriately to play the proper big brother."

"So, you are going to embarrass the hell out of him?" James laughed.

"Hmm, maybe I can get the twins to help," Harry thought aloud.

Now Lily looked nervous, "Which twins?"

Harry grinned, "Why both sets of them. I'm sure Fred, George, Thomas, and Albus would be happy to help."

Lily frowned disapprovingly, "I cannot allow you to embarrass my son like that." James looked a bit worried but then her face relaxed and a small smile crossed her lips. "Unless you are able to get me blackmail pictures of it."

Harry laughed, "I'm sure Dobby can help me out if I ask nicely."

Dinner finished with small talk about the family and the remodeling job Katie and Tia with Dobby had done on Harry's Hogsmeade house. Nothing of significance was discussed. It was simply three people attempting to develop a relationship to replace the one that nature would have intended for them to have.

Harry found himself enjoying their company both as family and as potential friends. (A childhood at the Dursleys taught Harry early that the two are not necessarily the same.)

Dessert was just starting when Tom and Andrea just happened to arrive. The arrival of Michael, Katie, Tia, Ron and their significant others was completely coincidental. Most of the conversation centered on Tom's announcement earlier in the day, but it soon turned to family matters and light conversation

Harry surprisingly found himself discussing dueling strategies with Bellatrix Potter nee Black. Harry had shied away from Ron's wife but he found her to be remarkably sensible with a wicked sense of humor. If someone had told a sixteen-year-old Harry Potter he would one day enjoy a pleasant conversation with Bella, he would have thought they had gone spare.

Overall, it was one of the most pleasant nights Harry had since his return from the past

--BD--

### 26 March 1998, Hogwarts

The Gryffindor Sixth and Seventh years trooped into the Great Hall en masse. The Seventh years were in the middle of preparing for their NEWTS with the help of the Sixth years. Hermione came up with the idea the year before and asked (i.e. bullied) her classmates into helping the older students. The now Seventh years were grateful now as they received help from the younger students.

Jimmy Potter slide into a seat next to his girlfriend, Ginny Weasley. The other Sixth years moved into their accustomed places around them. Hermione and Ron were sitting on the other side of the table and a couple places down from them.

Ron and Jimmy were good friends and teammates on the Quidditch team. Whilst Ron had been difficult when Jimmy and Ginny started dating, time and Hermione had mellowed his attitude. So it was a bit of a surprise when he started in on them ten minutes into dinner.

Ron finished his first plate of food when he called down the table. "Oi, Potter! You better be keeping your hands to yourself down there! Both hands above the table, mate!"

"Ronald!" Hermione protested as the entire Great Hall went silent.

Jimmy looked surprised at the sudden attack. He was speechless for a moment.

The same could not be said of his girlfriend.

"You keep your opinions to yourself, Ronald Bilius Weasley! Where Jimmy puts his hands is no business of yours!" Her voice turned seductive as she reached under the table. "Besides it's not his hands that you should be worried about."

Jimmy's shocked face turned from brother to sister.

The students around them started to laugh at Ginny's retort when Jimmy jumped up and started to scream. He jumped out of his seat and started hopping around.

"Mr. Potter!" McGonagall yelled. "What is your problem?!"

"There's something in my trousers!"

The Great Hall watched in shock as Jimmy ripped open his robes and started to undo his buttons in the middle of the Hall. A large bulge could be seen pressing out of his crotch. Several of the closer students screamed and moved back as they saw the bulge move.

The zipper on the trousers suddenly gave as a giant white anaconda slithered out. Jimmy was looking ready to faint when a giant voice boomed through the Great Hall.

**"WE APPROVE THIS MATCH BUT KEEP YOUR SNAKE IN YOUR PANTS!"**

Fireworks suddenly erupted around Jimmy as the snake exploded into a multi-color display. Ignoring the shouts of laughter all around him, Jimmy sank to the ground in relief.

A slight pressure in his hand made Jimmy look down. A small card had appeared in his hand. It read:

**Entertainment courtesy of**

**Big Brother**

**With Assistance from the Weasley and Prewitt Twins**

--BD--

17 June 1998 – Hogwarts

Tom and Harry arrived via the Floo into what had once been Albus Dumbledore's office and would soon be Tom's. Minerva McGonagall had declined moving into the office for the duration of her short time at the helm of the magical school.

The Floo spat Harry out onto the floor as Tom stepped gracefully into the room.

"Haven't you learnt to do it yet?"

"Oh shut up and give me a hand up."

"Okay, 'old man'."

They became aware of another person in the room when Professor McGonagall cleared her throat. "Good evening, Thomas."

"Hello, Minerva," Tom greeted her. "It is nice to see you again."

A small smile crossed the stern professor's face. "It will be nice to have you back at Hogwarts, Tom. I believe Albus would have been happy with your decision."

"The press seems to think I've gone spare," Tom answered with a grin. "Actually, I feel relieved to be getting rid of this burden. Hogwarts was always a lot more fun than politics. Thank you for inviting me to the Leaving Feast."

A raised eyebrow answered that comment. "Not very Slytherin of you to walk away from power."

"The reality of power is very different from what people think it is. When I told the muggle Prime Minister about my plans, he understood exactly why I was doing it."

A small nod was his only answer. Then the Transfiguration professor turned to look at Harry in a questioning way.

"Minerva, do you believe you have met Harry before? Albus asked Harry to be the new DADA professor. I've pressured him into taking the position."

McGonagall turned a disapproving eye on Harry. "Good evening, Mr. Potter. Professor Dumbledore informed me you would be taking the position several weeks before his death."

Harry smiled and answered, "Then he told you long before he asked me. He only asked me in Geneva. But that was Albus for you. He was always so optimistic that people would naturally do 'the right thing' that he accidentally boxed them in. Really used to bother me before. I always thought he was deliberately manipulating me. I think he got worse as he got older."

McGonagall's glare intensified at Harry's comments. "Some...irregularities have developed in processing your paperwork, Mr. Potter. I have been unable to locate any records of your NEWTS or even your education in general. Unless you can satisfy the school's requirements, you will not be able to take this position."

Tom and Harry exchanged a glance. "Minerva, didn't Albus tell you anything about Harry?" Tom asked.

"He merely said that Mr. Potter was well-qualified for the position and had previous teaching experience. I would doubt that based on his age, but I must accept what Albus said was true. However, where the Governors may have accepted the Headmaster's word, I do not have his influence."

"I'm sorry, Minerva. I assumed Albus or Filius would have told you before," Tom apologized.

"Informed me of what?"

"We will need your Oath to keep what you learn here secret," Tom told her.

The witch's lips set in a disapproving line. "Very well, except if what you tell me is a danger to the school or its students."

After Tom nodded with agreement and approval of her provision, she drew her wand and made a magical oath. "Very well, now what should Albus have informed me of?"

Harry silently cast a glamour on himself to appear as he did when he was Professor Evans. "Informed you, Ms. McGonagall, that I used to be your DADA professor."

McGonagall looked at him in shock. "You claim to be Professor Evans? But he would be over eighty years old! You only look eighteen."

"Sit down, Minerva," Tom said gently. "This may take a bit to explain."

Minerva McGonagall sat in shock as she listened to Tom and Harry spin a tale between them. Everything they told her was literally true but none of it was completely true. Harry told her he was born Harry Potter and worked as an Unspeakable. After Grindelwald's defeat, an unexpected incident with a Time Turner propelled Harry fifty years into the future. (The return trip being in fact a surprise to Harry.)

"I am supposed to believe that you are Tom's father and my former professor?" Minerva asked in disbelief.

Harry sighed from his chair opposite his old professor and student. "Okay. Your Third year after the Dark Army attack on the school, I caught you and a group of your Gryffindors attempting to sneak around and find out what was going on. I sent you back to your dorm. Then, you smiled at me when I watched you place the floating green and silver water balloons over the entrance to the Ravenclaw tower."



The Transfiguration professor turned pale. "Tom's wolf?"

Harry grinned as he dropped into his lupine form. After giving the shocked witch a wolfish grin with a tail wag, Harry returned to his normal form. "If you are really nice, I won't show that particular memory to the Marauders, the Weasley Twins or the Prewitt Twins," he offered in a cheeky tone.

"Actually Dad, I don't think we will have problems with the Governors anyway. Michael is the chairman. You know he will approve you," Tom offered innocently.

"Oh, Merlin," Minerva breathed in a whisper. "You really are Tom's father! No wonder he trusts you!"

"I'd like to think so," Harry smirked. "And since I was born a Potter, that explains why the Potters took in my wife and family after my 'disappearance'."

Harry was happy that he had only felt a slight hitch with the mention of Sarah. He still missed her and thought of her often. The last year had helped with accepting her loss. The Harry Potter that arrived in Hogsmeade in 1932 was a broken man after the loss of all those he called family. The young witch helped him deal with his loss over the years. Now he found her advice vital in dealing with her loss.

Minerva stood up breaking Harry out of his thoughts. "I will have to think about this more later. For now, we must go down to the Great Hall for the Feast. I am afraid young Mr. Weasley will suffer a breakdown if dinner is not served on time."

Harry and Tom laughed as they followed the professor out of the office.

--BD--

The last dinner of the school year filled the Great Hall with excited chatter. Tonight the normal House boundaries were relaxed during the meal as many students bounced around making summer plans. The presence of their new Headmaster added to their excitement. Minister Potter-Evans lit off a great deal of talk and speculation when

he stepped down to take a “lesser” position. The sense of change was quite exciting to the younger students.

The eldest students mostly ignored the speculation and excitement around them. The leaving Seventh year students’ talk was filled with nostalgia and mixed feelings. Hogwarts had been their home for nine months out of the year. Living together in their dorms for so long and in such important years, many of the students felt closer to their dorm mates than to their real families.

Harry was mostly ignored as he sat talking to the Charms professor. Filius was happy to see his old colleague again. “It will be good to have a good Defense professor back at Hogwarts,” the diminutive genius proclaimed.

“Calling any Potter ‘competent’ is a stretch,” the Potions Master sneered.

Harry and Filius ignored the snarky comments coming from Professor Snape. Tom assured Harry before that James never bullied the Slytherin. They did hate each other on sight and have a rivalry for Lily’s attentions but it never degenerated into bullying. Snape was never targeted for pranks unless he had done something to James or his friends first.

“It was amusing to have James stop in my office to run his prank and its motivation past me before doing anything,” Tom had told Harry one day when they were discussing it. “Nothing too out of hand though. I did accidentally provide James with the password to the Slytherin dorms once or twice.” The former Head of Slytherin House had smiled innocently at the admission.

Now Harry just tried to ignore the Potions professor’s comments as he talked with Filius. Finally, after a particularly vile comment about twelve year-old Sally Potter, Harry turned to face the greasy haired wizard.

“What can I do for you, Professor Snape?” Harry asked. “You’ve been sitting over here for the last twenty minutes trying desperately to get my attention. Well, now you have it. What did you need?”

"You must be a Potter. Arrogant to the bone!" Snape sneered.

"Thank you," Harry smiled in a way sure to goad the professor. "I am a Potter." Harry tilted his head in a questioning manner. "May I ask you a question, Professor Snape?"

"What?" came the growled reply.

"You were the youngest Potions Master in the last 400 years and had a brilliant position as a private potions researcher."

"Your question."

"Why did you leave it to teach at Hogwarts? You don't seem the type drawn to teaching young children. Yet you've been here for the last six years. I know they would love to have you as an independent researcher over at Phoenix."

"I would never lower myself to work for a Potter!" Snape shouted. The entire Hall went silent for a moment. Snape noticed this and stood up. He looked down at Harry and growled, "I will keep my own counsel on why I am here."

With a whirl, Snape turned and stalked out of the Great Hall, his cloak swirling behind him in that signature Snape style.

"I always wanted to learn how to do that thing with the cloak. I've never been able to do it nearly as well," Harry commented quietly to Filius.

The Head of Ravenclaw nodded enthusiastically. "I've tried too! Severus was able to do it even as a Second year!"

An approaching rising Seventh year stalked up to the table. He had been glaring at Harry all through the dinner.

Actually, Harry expected this visit sooner.

"Hello, Mr. Potter. What can I do for you this fine evening?"

The boy stopped on the other side of the table from Harry. "That was evil."

Harry smiled innocently. "I have no idea what you are talking about."

"I think Mr. Potter is referring to the large snake that slithered out of his pants in the middle of the Great Hall last week," Professor Flitwick supplied. "I must say, the fireworks and the loud voice booming out was a particularly nice touch."

Harry's Occlumency kept his laughter in. "Well, I don't know what else you should expect when your shorts come from WWW."

"They came from Mum!" Jimmy hissed.

"At least, so the note said," Harry allowed.

The just turned seventeen-year-old leaned in and whispered, "This means war!" Then he turned and stalked away.

"Oh, Jimmy!" Harry called after him. "Misters Fred and George Weasley have a nice full-color poster of the event hanging in their shop window. I did get you a nice advertising commission."

Jimmy turned as his face went pale. "You can't do that!" he whispered. "I'm of age. I'd have to give my permission."

"Well, James and I were going through a bunch of paperwork the day before your birthday. I suppose it's possible he signed it accidentally."

Jimmy could only stare at the face of his older brother in shock. A glance at his Uncle Tom gave no comfort as the incoming Headmaster was grinning broadly. Jimmy did the only thing possible and fled back to his seat.

"Did you really do that?" Filius asked as they watched Jimmy flee.

"No, but Dobby did get some really nice photos of the event and his face just now."

--BD--

The meal was coming to a close. Jimmy had received Dobby's picture of his face soon after returning to his seat and realized he had been pranked again. Professor McGonagall had already made her final announcements and the students were starting on the special dessert provided for the Leaving Feast.

Trelawney rose from her chair at the end of the staff table. It was not unusual for the Divination Professor to slip out of meals before the students were dismissed. She claimed the loud psychic noise generated by the students clouded her 'inner vision'. Harry rather suspected she was offended by the constant snickers about her subject heard whenever she left her tower.

The tall, thin, and odd-looking woman stepped to the edge of the rise the staff table stood upon. Her unusual presence quickly captured the attention of the Great Hall. The normal din dropped down to a whisper.

Harry noticed Trelawney's eyes were glazed over. A cold shot of adrenaline ran through Harry's system. He had seen her like this twice before.

Then she started to speak:

THE MAN WITH THE KILLING EYES,

THE VANQUISHER

AND THE REDEEMER, HAS RETURNED

HIS ARRIVAL MARKS THE START OF DARK'S RISE

THE HOUSE OF THE FOUNDERS WILL FALL TO DARK'S CHILD

THE POLES WILL CHANGE

AS LIGHT BECOMES DARK

AND DARK BECOMES LIGHT

HOPE RIDES ON THE REMNANT OF THE FOUNDERS HOUSE

HOPE DEPENDS ON THE FLOWERING OF FOUNDERS HEIRS  
AND THE SOULS OF THE VANQUISHER AND THE VANQUISHED  
IF TRIUMPHANT, THE CHILD OF DARK WILL COMPLETE  
DARKNESS'S WORK

With her final word, Trelawney dropped to the ground unconscious.

As chaos erupted in the Great Hall, Harry and Tom shared a glance. Harry could see his own concern mirrored in his son.

Tom stood up and, with a gesture, caused a loud boom to explode. The loud noise instantly quieted the room.

Minerva thanked Tom with a nod. Once she had everyone's attention, she announced. "Students, please calm down. You are in no danger. The staff and I will verify the school's security. Prefects, please see that all students return to their dorms immediately."

Once the students were moving in compliance to their Headmistress's instruction, Minerva turned to the staff. "Professor Sinistra, would you and Mr. Filch please take Professor Trelawney to the Hospital Wing? I would like to meet with the Heads of House in my office immediately. Minister Potter-Evans, Professor Potter, please join us also. I believe we have a great deal to discuss."

**A/N: I don't usually go for author notes or answer questions here. But a number of people have asked the same questions, so here goes: No DH, No HG, No HHR, Pairing: Not telling if any.**

**Thank you to Dellacouer once again got her great help as my beta!**

## Chapter 4- Unspeakable Summer (Part 1)

### 17 June 1998 – Hogwarts

The three Heads of House joined Harry and Tom with Professor McGonagall in the acting Headmistresses office. Snape had been summoned from his dungeons after Professor Trelawney's prophecy. McGonagall took a seat behind her desk whilst the other professors and Tom sat in chairs in front of it. Harry wandered over to a nearby window with an absent expression.

Professor Trelawney had been taken to the Hospital Wing where Madam Pomfrey reported the Divination professor remained unconscious. The Medi-witch noted that her magical core was depleted but no other signs of injury were found.

"Do you think that was a real prophecy?" Professor Flitwick asked in a curious voice.

"Don't be foolish!" Snape sneered. "That fraud wouldn't know a true prophecy if it tapped her with a wand. It was just more of her grandstanding."

"Severus, please don't talk about one of our colleagues in such a manner," McGonagall insisted.

Through his preoccupation, Harry suppressed a snort. He remembered McGonagall's opinions of Divination in general and Professor Trelawney in particular from his old timeline. He doubted those opinions had changed much now.

A doubt Snape confirmed a moment later.

"You think that woman is a fraud just as much as I do! How many staff meetings have I suffered through listening to the two of you snipe at each other?" the Potion Master sneered back.

"Now Severus, Minerva is simply trying to keep us on task," Tom said smoothly. "Issues with Sibyll aside, we must deal with the issue in front of us. I have no reason to doubt the authenticity of this

prophecy.” Snape seemed to nod a grudging acceptance of Tom’s comment whilst still not accepting the prophecy.

“I must agree with Tom,” Filius stated. “In all my time knowing Sibyll, this prophecy seems most uncharacteristic for her. Madam Pomfrey’s report would appear to back this theory.”

“Her magical core was never that large to start with,” Snape growled back. “How can we be sure this was not just a stunt?”

“Oh, it’s a real one,” Harry noted absently from his window. That turned the room’s attention in his direction.

“Are you sure, Mr. Potter?” Pomona Sprout asked cautiously.

The question broke Harry out of his reverie. He had not intended to answer the question aloud but he nodded. “I have seen her do this twice before. If she follows true to form, she will not remember what happened.” Harry paused a moment. “I’ve never seen her fall unconscious before though.”

“And where would you have seen this, Potter?” Snape spat. “You’ve never been a student here, *boy!*”

‘Same old Snape.’ Harry thought. ‘Sounds kind of like Uncle Vernon. I wonder if they could be related on his father’s side. Snape’s father was a muggle after all’

“Professor Potter is correct though,” said a dark cloaked figure that stepped into the room unannounced surprising of everyone. All of the professors jumped at the interruption. Harry dropped his wand out of its holster and into his hand. Harry recognized the cloak but kept his guard up.

“This is a private meeting,” McGonagall objected. “Who are you and why are you here?”

“You may call me Zed. I am with the Department of Mysteries,” the figure introduced himself while holding up a magical version of a badge. “We detected the event and came to get a recording of it. It must be placed in the Hall of Prophecy for proper documentation.”



Tom smiled, "You arrived quickly."

"Thank you, Minister, but we can't really take credit. Professor Trelawney radiated an unusually high amount of magic in making her prophecy. Even surrounded by all the magic in Hogwarts, it was easily detectable.

"But Mr. Potter is correct. It was a true prophecy of the Guidance type. What made it so unusual for a Trelawney prophecy is its length and the power output."

The professors stared at the Unspeakable in shock. "You mean to tell me she has told a true prophecy before." McGonagall demanded.

Zed nodded, "At least four that have come to fruition."

"That woman has been a fraud since the day she walked in here," Snape sneered. "Not one of her 'predictions' has ever come true. If it were, half of Gryffindor would be dead in one accident or another."

He paused a moment. "Not that that would be a bad thing," he added snarkily. A glare from the Head of Gryffindor answered that observation.

"Professor Trelawney, as much as she may wish to be a Seer, is in fact a Prophetess. I don't suppose any of you did a NEWT in Divination?" After no one admitted to that...distinction, Zed explained, "A Seer is able to use their inner vision to see probabilities and decision points. The multitude of possibilities can make them appear odd or even insane to outside observers. Sibyll Trelawney's grandmother, who helped raise her, had this Gift."

Listening to the Unspeakable, Harry started to wonder about Luna. Could that be why she seemed a bit distracted all the time? It also could explain why she knew about the old timeline. He would have to ask her. A small voice in his head asked, 'But would you understand her answer?'

Unaware of Harry's mental speculation, the Unspeakable continued his explanation. "A Prophet makes announcements of events to come that are guaranteed to happen. These are rare occurrences and the

giver frequently doesn't remember the event. The prophecy does not cause something to happen. It just points out a significant event. They are rarely understood until after the event. And even then there are frequently different interpretations of the event."

Prophecies made Harry's teeth hurt. "Then what good are they?"

The cloaked man shrugged. "By themselves, not much. But they always point to some event that will have a major impact on the world, both magical and muggle. Some can be self-fulfilling if the subject of the prophecy hears it and tries to alter the outcome.

Unfortunately, in this case, the Prophecy was made in an very public manner. While we could Oblivate the students, there is a high chance one would be missed or could have recorded it in some fashion before my associates and I could arrive."

McGonagall jumped to her feet to glare at the Unspeakable. "You will not be Oblivating any of my students!" Flitwick and Sprout moved to support her. Snape just sneered at their show of force.

Zed just waved their concerns away. "We already decided that would not be a proper course of action in this case for a variety of reasons, including the desire not to give any of the students excuses to 'forget' their homework." Harry and Tom snorted at Zed's dry comment.

"Unfortunately, it will mean that Sibyll will now be aware of her Prophecies as well." He shrugged, "Oh well, maybe it will make her a better professor." Turning to Harry, he asked, "Would you be willing to provide me with your memory of the prophecy, Mr. Potter? I am sure the professors would like to discuss how to handle this with their new Headmaster."

Harry noticed the Unspeakable making a subtle recognition signal with his left hand. "I suppose I can do that. Do you wish to do it here?"

"Unfortunately, we need you to come to the Hall to make a formal, witnessed deposit. The Hall's magic prevents altered memories from being placed into an Orb."

After saying his goodbyes, Harry followed the Unspeakable out of the Transfiguration Professor's office. The pair walked silently out of the school without a word until they reached the edge of the wards.

"So Albus, how is training going?"

'Zed' dropped the Obscuration charm on his hood and smiled at Harry. "Merlin, Gramps! How did you know it was me?"

Harry winced at the 'Gramps' nickname. The son of Ron and Bellatrix Potter was in fact Harry's grandson. But being called Gramps by a man that looked older than him seemed odd. So of course Albus and his brother Thomas did it a lot.

"Let's just say that you were a bit too comfortable in McGonagall's office and enjoyed twitting the professors also. That said you were a recent graduate and probably a Gryffindor to boot. Plus, those cloaks aren't as effective as the Department likes to advertise."

"That's not the real answer is it?" Albus observed with a grin.

A grinning Harry answered, "Nope, but it is the best one you are going to get."

Albus laughed at Harry's smug expression. "Training is going well. Thomas and I completed the magical combat training. Uncle Tom's little training sessions when we were still in school really helped. It allowed us to skip a full year of training. We finished the first year of non-combat training and have one more year to go. This summer we are doing our internship assignments."

Harry was impressed. If the training program was still as rigorous as it was in the 30's and 40's, then getting a pass on the combat training spoke to a great deal of skill in the two boys.

"Impressive," he commented. "So, how did you get sent out to Hogwarts for the prophecy?"

Albus smirked, "I was already there. The Department has recording mirrors in Trelawney's tower. Apparently, she goes into her trances when she's alone up there. I was checking to see if any new ones

had been recorded when the Department detected her magic. Otherwise a fully trained Unspeakable would have been sent."

"So, what happens now?" Harry asked. Seeing the look on Albus's face, Harry explained, "I've never worked the Hall of Prophecies or the Magical Research division. My time in the DoM was focused on fighting Grindelwald." Harry said DoM aloud as 'doom'.

Albus nodded in understanding. "The Orbs work like a specialized Pensieve, but once the memory is inside, only the subjects of the prophecy or the Unspeakable researchers can access them until the prophecy has been fulfilled."

"Did you hear it?"

"Only the last part," Albus answered. "Why?"

"I think we need to get this recorded and then talk to one of the Department's experts about what this can mean."

--BD--

Harry and Albus arrived at the Department of Mysteries' private Apparition point. Harry remained in civilian attire, as this was an open visit. All the Hogwarts House Heads were aware he was coming here, so it would have been odd if *two* Unspeakables arrived instead.

Harry acted the role of the first time visitor and allowed the re-hooded Albus to escort him to the Hall of Prophecy. The Hall had not changed much since the 1940's and looked identical to Harry's first visit in his Fifth year, except for the lack of smashed Orbs.

There were only two other people in the Hall when the two Potters arrived. One was a very old man Harry recognized as being the lead researcher for the Department of Mysteries. He held the same position when Harry joined the DoM in 1936. The second person in the room was an older wizard with short gray hair and a stern, disapproving expression on his face. By the way Albus braced at the sight of him, Harry guessed he was Cain's successor.

“Ah, Trainee Blue, is this the witness of tonight’s prophecy?” the old researcher asked.

“Yes, sir. Professor Potter witnessed the event along with most of the staff and students of Hogwarts.”

The researcher smiled at Harry. “It is good to see you again, Count. I remember you have always made things more exciting around here. I knew when I heard the first prophecy that you would be returning to us.”

“Archivist Jones, correct?” At the man’s smile, Harry continued, “It is nice to see you again as well.”

“May I introduce you to our current Department Head, Mr. Croaker?” the older Unspeakable asked.

“Good evening, Mr. Croaker,” Harry said with a polite nod.

Croaker’s frown deepened. “Count,” he said in an abrupt greeting. “We have a great deal to discuss. Your arrival in this time was expected but not necessarily a happy event.”

Harry was a bit surprised by this greeting, or lack thereof. He remembered Mr. Weasley pointing out Croaker at the Quidditch World Cup, but had never met the man before.

“Is there a problem, Mr. Croaker?” Harry asked.

“Can we get the memory first?” the archivist asked.

Harry drew his wand and extracted the memory. The white wisps of magic twirled around the tip of his wand as Jones presented an empty Orb. As the memory flowed into the Orb, the large obsidian wall behind them lit as the memory began to play. Harry could see the Great Hall in perfect detail as Trelawney started to speak.

THE MAN WITH THE KILLING EYES,

THE VANQUISHER

AND THE REDEEMER, HAS RETURNED  
HIS ARRIVAL MARKS THE START OF DARK'S RISE  
THE HOUSE OF THE FOUNDERS WILL FALL TO DARK'S CHILD  
THE POLES WILL CHANGE  
AS LIGHT BECOMES DARK  
AND DARK BECOMES LIGHT  
HOPE RIDES ON THE REMNANT OF THE FOUNDERS HOUSE  
HOPE DEPENDS ON THE FLOWERING OF FOUNDERS HEIRS  
AND THE SOULS OF THE VANQUISHER AND THE VANQUISHED  
IF TRIUMPHANT, THE CHILD OF DARK WILL COMPLETE  
DARKNESS'S WORK

The image faded away as the last wisp of memory was absorbed into the Orb. The room was silent as the last echoes of Trelawney's image faded.

Harry noticed a tag appear on the Orb.

Harry James Potter & (Unknown)

"Count, do you really think that is about you?" Albus asked.

Harry glanced at his grandson before nodding. "I think the first part points to me. It is a restatement of another of Trelawney's prophecies given to your Uncle Tom. She wandered into his office and said, 'The Man with the Killing Eyes, The Vanquisher and the Redeemer

will return. His arrival will mark the start of Dark's Rise.'

"I think that pretty firmly points it in my direction."

Croaker scowled, "Your little time travel stunt is going to have some major repercussions on our time."

"If I hadn't done what I did, you would all be dead right now," Harry glared back. "Everyone in the Ministry not a stooge of Voldemort was killed before the attack on Hogwarts. Then we lost three quarters of the Hogwarts students during the attack, including almost all the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh years! So don't talk to me about the cost!"

The other three Unspeakables in the room looked at Harry in shock.

"It was that bad?" Albus whispered.

"In addition," Harry went on inexorably, "the Hogwarts student body was 20 percent less than it is today due to students that were never born because their parents were killed in the war! The Potters, Blacks, Malfoys, Longbottoms, Weasleys, Bones, Zabini, Greengrass, Parkinson, Bell, Jones, and Ollivander families were completely wiped out along with almost every family with a seat on the Wizengamot. The British Wizarding World was depleted to the point it would not be able to sustain itself. Many of the survivors were leaving the country to get a fresh start away from the memories."

Jones and Croaker looked pale whilst Albus looked like he wanted to be sick. Albus had heard the stories before, but the true scope of the devastation never occurred to him before now. The stories always focused on Harry's life in the past, not on why he really went there.

"The Minister really caused all of that?" Jones asked in a quiet voice.

"No, not the Minister, it was Voldemort," Harry answered in a weary voice. "But it was not even really all Voldemort's doing. The British wizarding world created Voldemort. Its own actions- or inactions- are what doomed it."

"Tom and Albus have worked the last fifty years to try to remove or mitigate the conditions that gave rise to Voldemort. The Phoenix Foundation's orphanage was a part of that, but also the effort to remove the Pureblood causes of Voldemort's supporters. Voldemort was the rallying point, but to really change things, we needed to change the conditions as well."

Croaker shook himself. "You know that every name you gave us about who you knew in your original timeline was still born in this one? And that generally, they married the same person?"

"Tom said as much."

"I don't think you understand. The only 'new' names are people born to either Voldemort's victims', after their previous death, or people that were single or childless before. And the only people that married different people were those that never had children in the previous timeline." He gestured at Albus. "Trainee Blue here is an excellent example. His father never existed in the previous timeline and his mother died childless while married to another man."

Harry thought that last part was a polite way of describing the Death Eater Bellatrix LeStrange but Albus looked a bit greener at the thought of his mother married to a different man.

"What are you saying?" Harry asked.

"Why don't we move into my office before we continue this discussion?" Jones suggested. At the agreeing nods, Archivist Jones led the way to his comfortable and nearby office. The DoM was rather empty at this time of night in peaceful times, so they didn't pass anyone on their short walk.

Once every one was settled in a chair, Harry asked, "Now can you explain?"

Croaker smiled briefly. "You are exactly like your reputation claims, Count." Without explaining what that meant, he launched into his explanation.

"It was generally assumed by theorists that going back in time would either allow no changes or all of history would be changed in extreme ways. The Chaos Theory states that even the smallest thing you changed should have resulted in drastic changes in our history.

"Instead, it is almost like to changes were *managed*. The River Theory, as we call it now, that Ravenclaw developed, seems to be right but in ways we never expected. It's almost like an intelligent



being fighting to maintain its course. It is resisting all of your potential changes. Now that we have almost reached your departure point in the timeline, we have no idea what could happen next.”

Harry felt a sinking feeling in his stomach as he remembered Luna’s words to him at Dumbledore’s funeral. “What do you think is going to happen?”

“The best way we can describe it is a ‘correction’,” Jones answered. “It’s as if an adjustment must be made to get history back on its desired path. Think of a river that has been forced into a new path with dikes. Once it reaches the end of those dikes, it will choose its own path.” The room was quiet as they all considered the ramifications of Jones’s statement.

“Do you think the Founder’s House is Hogwarts?” Albus asked in a near whisper.

“It is a likely possibility,” Jones allowed. “The Hogwart’s Founders certainly looked at the school as their home.”

The conversation continued for the next hour as they discussed the possible meanings of the prophecy. The only thing that they agreed on was the identification of the Vanquisher and the Vanquished, each seemed to refer to Harry and Tom respectively.

Finally, Harry asked “Where do we go from here?”

“We would like you to resume working with the Department,” Croaker answered. “We need to find out what this prophecy means and how to mitigate its effects.”

Harry nodded his agreement. “I am committed to Hogwarts for the year as the Defense professor, but I still have the summer and my off times once classes start.”

“Excellent,” Croaker responded. The DoM leader still looked a bit shocked but he appeared to be recovering nicely. A sly smile crossed the Unspeakable’s face. “I think I will assign some assistants to you for the summer. The pair of ‘em are troublemakers and more than a bit cocky, but I think you can handle them.”

Harry glanced at his suddenly smiling grandson. "I guess I can handle that. If nothing else I can use the training dummies." The not-so-veiled threat did nothing to diminish the young Unspeakable's excitement.

The four men stood up and Harry shook hands with Croaker and Jones.

"Stop by on Monday and we will get you unofficially back on the rolls. Officially you won't exist, but at least we can get you access to the training areas and research materials. I'll key you into the wards so you can come without an escort."

With a few final words, Harry and Albus started back towards the Apparition point. The two Potters walked silently through the halls. Once they reached the departure area, Harry turned to his grandson.

"Bring your brother to my house on Sunday for lunch. We can discuss your assignment then."

"Okay, Gramps. I'm looking forward to it."

Harry stepped into the Apparition area with an evil smile. "We'll see if you feel the same way after I get you on the training floor, my young apprentice." Then with a slight pop, he was gone.

Remembering an exhibition fight at Hogwarts between his grandfather and his uncle, Albus suddenly didn't feel so excited.

--BD--

### 19 June 1998 – Diagon Alley

The Alley was crowded that afternoon as Harry appeared in the Apparition point near the Leaky Caldron. The Hogwarts students had taken the Express home the previous day and now the Alley was filled with students enjoying their first free day of the holidays. It was an unusually beautiful day in London and it seemed that most of the magical population was taking advantage of it.

Harry enjoyed moving through the crowded Alley. It did bother his combat-trained senses, but at the same time, it was oddly comforting. No one looked twice at him. He had been able to walk anonymously through the Alley as James Evans, but it was somehow odder to be able to do it now in his own time as Harry Potter without anyone pointing at him.

Walking casually down the Alley, Harry passes a couple large groups of former Hogwarts students. The groups seemed to be more mixed Houses than Harry would have expected. One group included Susan Bones, Blaise Zabini, Justin Finch-Fletchley, Su Li, and Tracey Davis. Not only was it mixed by Houses - only Gryffindor was not represented – but also by blood. Susan and Blaise were Pureblood; Tracey was a Half-blood; with Justin and Su being Muggle-born. The mixture would never have occurred in the original timeline.

Thoughts of the changes to this timeline brought back questions about the new prophecy. Through some deliberate misdirection, the students believed that Trelawney, as a publicity stunt, staged the entire incident. It seemed that the staff, except the Heads of House, believed it also. As she did not remember what happened herself, no one seemed to believe her claims of innocence. For now it seemed the prophecy's validity was kept secret.

Harry shook off his thoughts and continued on his errand. After a short walk he was entering Flourish and Blotts. Unlike the rest of the Alley, the bookstore was relatively quiet. Not many students want to buy books on their first day of holiday.

Seeing a potential customer, a mousy looking wizard in plain brown robes approached with a smile on his face. "Good morning, I am Muris Blott, the manager. May I help you find something today?"

Harry smiled at the man, "Good morning, Mr. Blott. My name is Harry Potter. I will be the Defense professor at Hogwarts for the coming year. I wanted to drop by to give you my booklist. I know how difficult it is when the lists come out late."

The manager's eyes lit with gratitude at Harry's comment. "Yes, thank you, professor! It is a challenge each year getting all the books in time. This is most appreciated."

Harry and the manager spoke for a few minutes over some questions about the books and one or two advanced books that would have to be kept in a secure area. Their conversation finished, Harry turned to leave the store when he saw someone standing by one of the bookshelves that was no real surprise at all.

Only Hermione Jane Granger would be buying textbooks the day after finishing her final year at Hogwarts.

“School is just finished, Miss Granger. Shouldn’t you be out enjoying the day?”

Hermione turned in surprise as the voice caused her to jump.

“Oh, hello Mr. Potter. I was just looking for some books on wizarding law. I start working with the DMLE on Monday. I wanted to make sure I was prepared. I will also be starting the Advanced Magical Theory studies program at Phoenix starting in the fall.”

‘Hermione sure hasn’t changed,’ Harry laughed to himself. Aloud he smiled and said, “I am sure you will be more than prepared. And please call me Harry.”

Hermione flushed a bit. She remembered doubting the man’s existence for years and now here he was standing in front of her. “Thank you, Mr.- Harry. So what are you doing here if we should be outside?”

“I just stopped in to drop off my booklist for next term. Albus asked me to take the Defense position before he passed. I hadn’t said yes yet but I didn’t want to leave Tom with filling the position while getting used to the Headmaster’s job.”

The young soon-to-be Ministry worker paled at Harry’s casual mention of the giants of the wizarding world. Where Harry saw them as friend and son, Hermione saw Headmaster and Minister. The curly-haired witch’s lips twisted in a faintly disapproving expression at Harry’s familiar mentioning of the two magical greats.

It reminded Harry that this was not his Hermione. The original Hermione had been shaped by the events of her seven years of

friendship with Harry Potter and the fight against Voldemort. This was a Hermione that never dealt with war and loss; or learned to break the rules sneaking around Hogwarts on one adventure or another.

To break the awkward moment, Harry asked, "What will you be doing with the DMLE?"

The question deflected Hermione's disapproval as she launched into an explanation of her new position. The genius witch would be apprenticing with the DMLE's investigative unit. The unit was separate from the Aurors that served in a role similar to muggle street police or SWAT teams, or Hit Wizards that performed as guards (and sometimes as assassins). The Investigative Unit did exactly that. They investigated all types of crimes in the wizarding world and then called in the Aurors to make the arrest.

"I will be working with the group that looks at the magic used in the commission of crimes," Hermione explained. "Many of these magics are dark or obscure. Last month they arrested a man in Belfast using a ritual to seduce young muggle women in the area. When the Aurors first looked at it, they only looked for the standard potions and compulsion spells. It was not until..."

'Merlin, Hermione hasn't changed that much,' Harry thought as the witch excitedly explained to Harry all the intricacies and methods used in investigating and prosecuting crimes.

When the young witch finally paused for a breath, Harry asked, "Have you read all of the DMLE's training materials already?"

"Well, yes, but not in the detail I'll need to be successful! I only got the books after I received the offer after the Yule holidays. NEWTS took so much time that I wasn't able to adequately prepare. I have so much to prepare for before I start training on Monday!"

"Relax, 'Mione!" a new voice jumped in to the conversation. "You are going to training, not to show them you've already trained yourself!"

Harry looked over at the newcomer. In an odd way, the Golden Trio was back together again.

"Hello Ron. Feel good to be done with Hogwarts?" Harry asked.

"Too right, mate," the tall red-head agreed with a smile. "Too much school can drive a guy barmy. I mean, look at the professors, barmy every one of them!"

"Ronald!" Hermione scolded. "How can you say such a thing! An education is very important and does not make one barmy!" She pointed at Harry, "And he is the new Defense professor!"

Harry laughed as Ron looked at her with a blank expression and said, "But he's a Potter. They're all barmy already."

Hermione looked ready to explode when Ron closed in and kissed her. She looked like she wanted to protest a first but then gave into the feelings.

When they finished, Ron smirked at Harry and winked. Harry found he enjoyed the 'new' Ron. He carried himself with a self-confidence he never had before. It kind of hurt Harry to think his friend did better without Harry in his life, but Harry also realized that it was really due to changes he'd helped to make in this timeline.

But it still hurt a bit.

"Come on, Hermione," Ron was saying. "The rest of the gang is waiting at Florean Fortescue's Ice Cream Parlor before we head down to the twins' place." He glanced at Harry, "You are welcome to come too. We might have another Potter or two in tow also."

Hermione finally agreed to buy her selections and leave the book shop. After a moment, Harry agreed also and the trio walked out into the Alley.

For a moment Harry flashed back to the last time the three friends had walked this Alley together. The Death Eaters were attacking WWW. The twins with Angelina Johnson, Katie Bell, and Lee Jordan were using their products to hold them off until the Order could arrive. That was the battle where they lost Charlie Weasley, Katie and Lee.

"You okay there, mate?" Ron asked. "You zoned out a bit."

Harry smiled at Ron and shrugged, "Just a bit lost in my thoughts. So, Hermione's going to be saving us all from criminals, what are you going to be doing?"

"Reserve Keeper for Puddlemere United," Ron answered proudly.

"Not the Cannons?" Harry asked in shock. The Ron he knew would have loved to play for Chudley.

The tall wizard shrugged. "They are on the ups but they have two decent Keepers already. Ollie Wood is the new Captain at Puddlemere. I reserved for him on the Gryffindor squad and then became Captain when he left. We work well together and he can get me up to speed on the professional leagues fast.

"Besides, Puddlemere made the best offer."

"Well-done," Harry approved with a smile. Harry was again impressed with how Ron had grown up and seemed to be thinking things through.

The conversation continued as the trio walked to the ice cream shop. Harry and Ron discussed Puddlemere's chances in the upcoming Quidditch season as they walked.

"Harry!" a girl's voice called out excitedly as they stepped into the ice cream shop. A thirteen-year-old missile slammed into him and wrapped him in a hug. "Where have you been? We tried to call you this morning!"

Harry smiled down at his sister, Sally. "I hope you don't plan to do that when you walk into my class next year," he said to the rising Third year.

A fake pout crossed her lips. "I have to go to your class? Can't you just give your favorite sister an O?"

"Only sister, thank Merlin," James Potter Jr. groaned good-naturedly.

"I heard that," she growled in reply. "Be a nice big sister and hit him for me, Ginny." The group laughed as James pretended to cower from his girlfriend.

Before any mayhem could erupt, Harry greeted the rest of the small group. Neville Longbottom, Luna Lovegood, and Hannah Abbott all welcomed Harry to their table.

"Neville will be with you at Hogwarts, Harry," James said. "Professor Sprout just offered him an Apprenticeship in Herbology."

"Really? Well done, Neville!" Harry congratulated the young wizard.

Neville smiled his thanks as he took Hannah's hand. "Thanks, I'll only be there two days of the week and Saturdays. I'll also be taking the Herbology Master classes at Phoenix three days of the week."

"You are going to Phoenix too?" Harry asked. "Is that common now?"

"It is for those of us that want to receive a Mastery. Not many are willing to take on full-time apprentices anymore. If you are lucky, you get a mixed offering like Neville," Hermione answered. "Where did you go to school? How did you get your Defense Mastery?"

Harry could see the curiosity alight in the bushy-haired witch's eyes. "Oh, I went to a smaller school than you knew at Hogwarts. As for my mastery, I had a real bastard of a master that I had to defeat for it."

Harry smirked inwardly as everything he said was true from a certain point of view. His Hogwarts was smaller in population. And Voldemort was his 'master' in many ways. Learning to defeat the Dark Lord was the driving force behind most of his skills.

Hermione looked like she wanted to continue the questioning, but Harry preempted her by turning to Ginny and asking, "So, has my good-for-nothing younger brother proposed yet?" Jimmy and Ginny both turned bright red as Sally giggled into Harry's shoulder.

"That was so mean," she laughed in his ear.



Ron and Neville started to heckle the younger man as Jimmy glared at Harry.

"I still haven't paid you back yet for that prank in the Great Hall!"

"Wait! That was you?" Neville asked.

Harry smiled innocently. "I have no knowledge what he's talking about."

"Oh, no one believes that bloody nonsense!" Jimmy growled back, "even if your little calling card did disappear."

"Jimmy, language!" Hermione admonished.

"I talked to Dad and the rest of the Marauders. You can expect payback, Harry!"

"Why not use the twins or the Prewitts also?" a laughing Ron asked through teary eyes.

Harry simply smiled beatifically as Jimmy muttered, "He's already recruited them to his side."

"Neville dear, can we go on holiday to the Americas?" Hannah asked. "I don't want to see the Potter prank war destroy England with me in it."

--BD--

The group was moving down the Alley before Harry was able to get to talk with Luna.

"Hi Harry. It's nice to see you having fun with your family," she said in a distracted voice.

"How are you doing, Luna?"

Luna turned to smile fully at Harry. "I can't wait to be in your classes again! Can we sign a contract again? What happened to Marietta was funny!"

Hermione glanced at the spacey blonde, "Luna, you never had class with Professor Potter before!"

Luna looked confused, "Don't you remember? Did the griftlers get tangled in your hair again? They like to suck the memories from otherwise intelligent people. That's why most people can't see the Crumple-Horned Snorkack. It was your idea but it was fun to sneak around."

Hermione turned around in a huff at the odd girl's comments. Harry used that as an opportunity to steer the girl a bit away from the rest of the group.

"Luna, you heard the prophecy. Do you know what is going to happen?" he asked in a low voice.

"I never pay attention to that kind of thing, Harry. Divination is kind of a silly thing. We already know what is going to happen after today."

"What is that?"

"Tomorrow."

Harry groaned at the answer. Luna smiled up at his response.

Then her expression became a bit more serious and the clouds cleared from her eyes. "It's already started, Harry. Pay attention to the prophecy's warnings. You can't keep it from happening, but you might be able to change *how* it happens."

Luna smiled and wrapped her hands around Harry's bicep. "Can we learn to cast spells in zero-G? I think it would be fun to go shooting around the classroom like those Astro-nuts we saw in that movie?"

"What movie was that?"

"Armageddon. Jimmy took us to see it last night. Can we have giant rocks flying through the room for us to dodge too?" Harry started to laugh.

“What are you two talking about?” a curious Hermione asked. A part of Harry wondered if she had been trying to eavesdrop, but he dismissed it as paranoia from too many combat situations and training.

“Luna wants to recreate the asteroid scene from Armageddon in my classroom. She thinks it would be neat to duel in that environment.”

Hermione just smiled and shook her head in resignation from Luna’s flights of fantasy. Luna smiled at Harry before skipping over to wrap her arm around Hermione. She then started talking about Rocnites that lived high above the Earth. When they die they dropped to the ground and muggles thought they were ‘shooting stars’.

Harry was left alone to once again consider if Luna was that spacey or just winding them all up.

When Luna turned back and winked at him, Harry decided he really didn’t want to know.

--BD--

Weasley Wizarding Wheezes was packed.

The shop occupied an excellent vantage point that had a commanding view down the Alley and into the square outside the Ministry’s Diagon Alley office. The Ministry office was not much of an office, more a Floo point that allowed politicians to arrive in the square to make appearances, or hold press conferences. Then they could sneak out again without having to walk to one of the public Apparition points.

Since the founding of WWW, the Ministry had to contend with the mocking displays the Weasley twins often placed around their shop that was in full view of the square. No one was safe as they even mocked the Minister who was their unofficial ‘uncle’. Unlike most in the Ministry, Tom found it amusing.

Today, the store was packed as a horde of WWW customers refilled their pranking arsenals after being depleted at school. The twins had employees working two registers to keep up with all the customers.

The proud proprietors themselves were gleefully demonstrating their works of genius- or madness- to their admiring fans.

Spotting the new contingent entering the store, one twin called out, "Look, Fred, it's our ickle brother, Ronniekins!"

"And he brought our bratty ittle sister too with her boy-toy," the other twin called back.

Ron and Ginny rolled their eyes as the twins spotted Luna. Together they dropped onto their knees in front of her and started to bow. "Oh, great goddess of the Moon! How may we serve thee!" Luna just smiled, patted them each on the head as if they were a pair of dogs and then walked on past.

The Weasley Twins grinned at one another as they started to stand up. It wasn't until a little girl asked, "Mummy, why do those two men have holes in the back of their trousers?" that they realized there might be a problem.

Harry and Jimmy were perfectly positioned to comment on the unusual amount of Weasleys on display.

"Nice boxers, mates," Jimmy commented with a huge grin.

The twins looked at each other again. Then Fred said, "Brother of mine, I believe our Moon Goddess has exposed our moons!"

George grinned, "A most worthy goddess!"

"Shall we?"

"Yes, lets!"

The twins made a grand exit out of the shop and into the back room whilst bowing and waving the whole time. Most of the store's patrons cheered the laughing twins.

Most of the patrons that is, except the mother of the little girl who first pointed out their 'seatless' condition. She rushed her daughter out

with her eyes covered and muttering under her breath about the depravity of the new generation.

--BD--

Harry wasn't able to meet with the Weasley Twins for a couple of hours. Jimmy and the rest had long since left the Alley to return home as the sun was setting. Harry amused himself in examining their products and reminding himself what a pair of geniuses the two really were. Eventually, the terrible two were able to hand over the running of the store to their employees

They led Harry through their workshop and into a small, cramped office in the back. The spreadsheets and productivity charts displayed in the room would not have looked out of place in any muggle business.

Fred welcomed Harry to their office with a graceful bow. "Welcome to the sanctum sanctorum, o' revered silent partner!"

"Sanitarium would be more accurate," Harry grinned back.

George looked thoughtful, "True. But completely beside the point. What can we do for the man who made all our dreams come true-"

"- without ever meeting us?" Fred finished.

Harry grinned. He really did miss the twins. "First I need to tell you a little story."

"Oh, Uncle Harry is going to tell a story! We need popcorn!"

"Shut up, Fred! Go ahead, Uncle Harry!"

"Oi, you're Fred!"

Okay, maybe he didn't miss them that much.

Harry wandlessly conjured them a supersized tub of popcorn with extra butter. The Twins grinned and dove in.

“Now, the reason I knew the two of you troublemakers needed money to start this place is I gave you the money before. Just after my Fourth year and your Sixth.”

“But you were not at Hogwarts with us,” one twin said in confusion.

Harry started telling the twins the story of the Boy-Who-Lived and Voldemort. The twins cheered along hearing about Harry’s adventures at Hogwarts with their brother and Hermione. They paled when they heard about the diary and the basilisk.

“Is that thing still down there?”

“Salazar? Yep. Tom had to wake it up about thirty years ago. It’s only about thirty feet long now. Some of his research down there disrupted the stasis spell. It was either wake it or kill it. He’s actually a friendly bugger for a snake. Just don’t wake him up or he gets grumpy.”

The twins looked a bit disturbed at that idea, so Harry returned to telling his story.

They enjoyed hearing about the war of Umbridge and their departure from Hogwarts. Harry told them about the original founding of WWW. That was the last of the ‘good’ stuff.

For the next hour, Harry explained about the war and the losses the Light side sustained. Both twins were crying as they heard about the deaths of everyone they knew and loved. In a near whisper, Harry told them about traveling back fifty years in an attempt to change history.

The story paused for them to each get a cup of tea.

Once they were settled back down, Harry told them about his role in the war against Grindelwald and raising the would-be Dark Lord.

“Uncle Tom would have been this Voldemort chap?” George asked in disbelief. Harry’s confirmation of this information left them stunned.

Finally, Fred asked, “Why did you tell us all this?”

Harry smiled. He'd wondered when they would ask him that question. "I am recruiting, in a manner of speaking. Let me show you something."

He pulled the last remnants of his WWW products that had traveled back in time with him. They were delighted as they studied the Extendable Ears, Decoy Detonators, and the Portable Swamp.

Harry gave them some time to look at their products that they never made. Once he had their attention, he said, "I need you two geniuses to start inventing. I will fund all of your research. Hire someone else to manage the shop and make the products you already have. You should have done that anyway. I need you to come up with some truly nasty stuff. You're going to be my own little Q-Branch."

"But why?" Fred asked.

"There is no Dark Lord now," George added.

Harry looked at the twins with a serious expression and said, "It looks like one is on his way. And I want to be prepared when he gets here. A prophecy said that my arrival in this time would be a signal." The twins shared an uneasy glance.

A mirthless grin crossed Harry's face. "Oh, and consider yourselves recruited. We can get you sworn in as members of my unit on Monday. Welcome to the Unspeakables."

**A/N: This chapter is split in two parts because it was getting too long. Part 2 will cover the rest of the summer. I hope you will all forgive me for posting sooner rather than later!**

**A/N:** I found a timeline issue and it was on the very first page of *Altered Destinies*. I set the date of Voldemort's fall as 31 December 1999. Harry departs on the day after his 19th birthday, 1 August, 2000. The problem is in August 2000, Harry would be 20, not 19. I am pushing the date of Harry's departure to 1 August 1999. It does not really matter in AD, but I wanted to make that correction.

**A/N2:** At the request of several reviewers, attached is an updated list of the Potters.

### **The Potters**

*(Ages at the end of AD (April 1997))*

**Albus Potter**(Al)- 17, 7th year Gryffindor, Seeker; son of Ron and Bellatrix; twin brother of Thomas

**Don Prewett** – 27, son of Katie (Potter) and Gideon Prewett; Potions Master, Western Africa Magical Institute

**Harry Potter**– 18, “The Count” former Unspeakable physically about 18 but about 30 mentally and emotionally

**Hypatia (Tia)Prewett** – 57, lead researcher and librarian for the Phoenix Magical University James Evans Library; married Fabian Prewett; 1 daughter- Melissa

**James Potter**- 38, married to Lily Evans, children: Harry 18, James 15, Sally 11

**James Potter Jr.** (Jimmy) -15, 5th year Gryffindor, dating Ginny Weasley, reserve Seeker

**Jonas Potter-Evans** – 39, son of Tom and Andrea Potter –Evans, father of Michele; senior manager of Gringott's Treasure Recovery Department-India

**Katie Prewett**- 60, Head of Pediatric Healing at St. Mungos; married to Gideon Prewett, two grown children: Don and Mary



**Lily Potter** – 38, married to James Potter, spell researcher

**Mary Prewett** – 35. daughter of Katie (Potter) and Gideon Prewett; Healer – Salem Magical Medical Center

**Melissa Prewett** – 30, daughter of Tia (Potter) and Fabian Prewett; cursebreaker living in Egypt partnered with Bill Weasley.

**Michael Potter** – 60, Director of Phoenix Foundation, Wizengamot member, Hogwarts's Governor; widower (wife: Karolina), two grown sons: Robert and Samuel

**Michele Potter-Evens** – 10, soon-to-be part-Veela Hogwarts student

**Robert Potter** – 40, son of Michael Potter; magical artist living in Canada

**Ron Potter** – 57, Head Auror; married to Bellatrix Black; two sons Albus(Al) 17, Thomas 17

**Sally Potter**– 11, 1st year Ravenclaw; daughter of James and Lily

**Samuel Potter** – 35, son of Michael Potter; manager of the Fitchburg Finches

**Thomas Potter**- 17, 7th year Slytherin; Quidditch Captain and Seeker; son of Ron and Bellatrix; twin brother of Albus

**Tom Potter-Evans** – 70, born Tom Riddle; Minister of Magic; married to Andrea Sardonnnes; son Jonas 39, granddaughter Michele 10

## Chapter 5 – Unspeakable Summer II

21 June 1998

It was a beautiful Scottish spring morning. Hogsmeade smelled clean after the rains of the night before. The air held a sense of anticipation.

On the edge of the village sat a modest home. The recently renovated house had fresh paint and a new roof. A large, covered front porch lined the front of the house. The garden appeared immaculate with rose bushes lining the white picket fence.

Sitting on the porch with a cup of tea sat a dark haired wizard in casual muggle clothing with a pair of glasses with a thin wire rim. The young man sat with a patience that was unusual in someone his age. It was the stillness of the experienced hunter or a combat-hardened veteran. Both would be unusual to find in this peaceful wizarding village.

The peace was broken when a pair a slight pops echoed through the silent village lane. A pair of wizards appeared in typical black robes. With only a glance around them, they started towards the home at the end of the lane. An observer, if one were around, would have noted that the newcomers looked remarkably similar to the young man waiting on the porch, with the same messy black hair and the same general build. Only the fact the newcomers were four inches taller than the man on the porch was a major change in their appearance.

However, unlike the waiting man, these two walked with a bouncing step that screamed of barely restrained enthusiasm and energy. For many, it was tiring even to watch.

The two men paused briefly at the boundary of the wards before stepping through. Once through the wards, they immediately spotted the man waiting for them and greeted him with huge smiles.

"Hi Gramps!" they called up to the man.

"Have you been spending all of your time renovating your house?" one asked as they climbed onto the porch.

"No, Dobby went a bit beyond my 'clean up the yard' directions. Did a brilliant job of it though."

One of the men settled into the empty chair. "We haven't been here since you left on your tour. What's he done on the inside?"

Harry smiled at Al and Thomas, "Fortunately, your Aunts Tia and Katie did the decorating ideas, but he did all the real work." He stood up and gestured, "Come on, we should talk inside."

"Why can't we talk out here?" Thomas asked as they followed Harry into the house. "The Fidelius Charm will prevent anyone from listening to us."

"You mean, anyone except people that know about my house? I know that is all family members at this point but it's an example. Besides, we know nothing about our opponents except that they exist."

"Since we have no idea who they are, we also don't know what they are capable of doing. Remember Moody's motto?"

"CONSTANT VIGILANCE!" the twins chorused.

Harry had seen Moody at Albus Dumbledore's funeral. Moody never lost his leg or his eye in this timeline. People still used the 'Mad-Eye' nickname but they thought it came from the man's habit of glaring at everyone. Harry did not approach the old Auror. It was neither a good time or place. But he had heard a number of stories from his son Ron about Moody's career after James Evans "disappearance".

Harry led the way into his study where the three Potters settled down into the comfortable chairs and couch. They had just gotten seated when Dobby appeared.

"Will Master Harry Potter be wishing for refreshments for Master Tomas and Master Al?" the elf asked.

"Just a pot of tea would be great," Harry answered.

A faintly disapproving look crossed Dobby's face just before he disappeared. A moment later a silver platter with a full tea set and biscuits appeared on the low table in front of the couch.

"Dobby doesn't think much of your hospitality," Al laughed.

Harry chuckled. "Dobby thinks it is important for the 'Great Harry Potter' to make the right impression. He is very concerned with appearances."

"He did a great job on the inside of the house from what we saw of it."

“Almost all of the rooms in the house have been redone, except for my training room. Your Aunt Katie updated your grandmother’s potions lab.” A small smile crossed Harry’s lips. “That lab was her pride and joy. We updated the ingredients that had gone bad but also brought in modern Muggle lab benches, burners and glassware. They recently did the same thing at St. Mungos and have seen a nice improvement in potion effectiveness with fewer failures. Sarah would have loved it.”

Thomas looked intrigued by the idea. “Why haven’t they done the same thing at Hogwarts?”

“Snape’s still a conservative, prejudiced twit from what Tom tells me.” Harry shrugged. “What is his problem with the Potters by the way? He still seems to hate all things Potter.”

“Uncle James explained it to us once,” Thomas said. “From his point of view and what Remus told us, it is simple jealousy. Snape and Aunt Lily were friends before Hogwarts and were close when they started school. Uncle James was Mr. Hogwarts all seven years he was there; Quidditch star and captain, Transfiguration expert, leader of the Marauders, very popular, and from a large, connected family. Or in other words, everything Snape wasn’t.

“Uncle Tom was still teaching Defense and was Head of Slytherin House so none of the Marauders’ pranks were too far over the line, more funny than malicious.”

“Aunt Lily and Uncle James started dating in their Fifth year, I think,” Al added. “Basically, Uncle James was or had everything Snape wanted. With Uncle Tom as his Head of House, he couldn’t even try to set Uncle James up to get in trouble. So for seven years he had someone he cast as his rival that he couldn’t touch except in Potions class. Since Potions was never a big thing for Uncle James, Snape just sort of festered.”

Thomas nodded his agreement. “I think the fact Uncle James didn’t see him as a rival in return made it worse. Even Professor McGonagall agrees Uncle James didn’t do anything to purposely target Snape.”

“Snape’s final break with Aunt Lily came at the start of their Sixth year. Snape was picking on a First year that turned out to be cousin Melissa. Aunt Lily tore into him. He called her a Mudblood and she broke his nose with a single punch,” Al smiled at the image. “Uncle James saw that last part of it and actually held Aunt Lily back from hitting him again. It didn’t help that Sirius was cheering her on.”

“He was a git towards Al all seven years we were at Hogwarts,” Thomas said. “He ignored me since I was in his House as long as we won Quidditch matches.”

“We got it bad enough because of being part of the Potter clan in general but it wasn’t too bad. Not nearly what Jimmy has to deal with,” Al added.

Harry grimaced in complete understanding of what his brother was dealing with in Potions. “What about Sally?”

“Sally thinks she confuses him. She looks enough like Aunt Lily that he kind of avoids her.”

“He’d better behave next year,” Harry commented. “What kind of big brother would I be if I didn’t look out for them?” he asked rhetorically.

Harry shrugged it off. “But that’s not why I asked you two to come by today.” The twins sat up a bit in their seats. “Croaker has assigned the pair of you to me until this prophecy issue is resolved. He also said I would be coming in as an ‘Unofficial’.”

“Al mentioned that,” Thomas said. “What does that mean?”

“Strictly speaking from a legal sense, the DoM Operations is limited to a certain size in peacetime and may not conduct operations within the country without Wizengamot approval. However, since I won’t be on their roles as an Unspeakable, we can skirt that law. If we get caught though we’re on our own.”

“But what about us? We are ‘Official’ aren’t we?”

Harry smirked, "You boys will be handing in your resignations tomorrow. Croaker will regretfully accept them, of course. Don't worry. You'll still get your princely Ministry salaries."

Al and Thomas smiled at each other. This sounded like fun.

"What about our training?" Al asked.

Harry smiled. "I will be taking over your training. Also, I've recruited the Weasley twins so they will be joining you."

"Fred and George? Why them?" Thomas asked, surprised by the inclusion of his cousins.

"That pair are the most unorthodox thinkers I've met in the Wizarding World. I think we'll need that."

Harry's smile grew positively evil. "Oh, I almost forgot. I've asked an old acquaintance to join me in getting the four of you ready for real life operations."

"Who's that?" Al asked nervously. "Moody?"

The evil smile grew. "Nope. Christina"

The twins paled as the memory of the day of Harry's return came back to them.

### Flashback: 13 April 1998

The afternoon was winding to a close. The Quidditch match was long over and the parents would soon be departing the school. A late lunch had been prepared and the Great Hall was filled with students and their parents.

The Headmaster stood up to make his final farewells to the parents. The students generally tuned it out until the final comments.

"As a final event, we have been offered to witness an exhibition duel. This will be occurring at the Quidditch pitch and will be refereed by our own Professor Flitwick."

Thomas Potter glanced down the table as a Fifth year Slytherin boy stood up and asked, "Who is fighting, professor?"

Dumbledore smiled. "Did I forget to mention? Our very own Minister of Magic, a former Hogwarts Professor of Defense, will be dueling a very talented wizard, Mr. Harry Potter."

An excited babble had broken out as the students and their parents discussed the duel. But that was nothing compared to the responses of the Potter children in attendance. Al and Thomas Potter caught each other's eyes. With only a nod they started taking bets from their Housemates. Most of the students were betting on the Minister against the unknown Harry Potter.

The Great Hall cleared as the students and parents walked back down to the pitch. The Quidditch rings were gone and a warding bubble surrounded the pitch itself.

Al and Thomas rushed to the pitch to claim the best seats. This was something neither twin wanted to miss. They had heard stories about their grandfather's power and skill all of their lives. This wasn't something they could miss.

Jimmy and his friends were just sitting in the next section when Hermione noticed something odd on the pitch. "Why is my grandmother down there?" Hermione asked in a worried tone.

The others looked and recognized the woman they had met as Mary Granger standing next to the cloaked figure of Harry Potter.

"Hermione," Padma started in a curious tone, "I thought your grandmother was a Muggle. Why does she have a wand in her hand?"

Jimmy laughed as Hermione sat speechless. Thomas and Al didn't even glance at each other. They knew this was going to be incredible

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The duel began with a gesture from Flitwick. The audience leaned forward in the stands to see what happened.

The twins tensed as for a moment nothing happened. Then a lightning fast exchange of spells exploded through the space between the two wizards. Neither twin could say who fired the first spell. Uncle Tom, being significantly older physically, held his ground and allowed massive shields to accept the brunt of Harry's attacks.

Their grandfather defied all of their expectations. Harry moved with the fluid grace that allowed the spells to pass by, just missing him. It didn't seem to be planned, more like a dance that removed his body from the path of the oncoming spells more by accident than by design.

Their parents, Ron and Bella Potter, were considered amongst the top five duelers in the Auror Corps. Only Mad-Eye Moody himself was considered superior to their mother. Many of her training exercises focused on situational awareness. Bellatrix Potter claimed that being able to track everything going on in the battle around you enabled a good dueler to become exceptional. Without it, even the greatest spellcaster would be fatally weakened in a true combat situation. Three things made Harry an incredible Seeker. His flying skill was actually the most common of the three. His lightning reflexes matched with a situational awareness second to none were the true factors in his success in Quidditch and in battle.

The show their grandfather was putting on proved their mother's point.

Yet, their Uncle Tom's shields held firm against everything Harry was sending his way. The shields held rock steady as incredible amounts of magical energy smashed into them.

The twins did not know which way to look. The spells came fast and furious. The spells crashing on Uncle Tom's shields left a brilliant light show while their grandfather seemed to dance through the fight.

Although neither wizard seemed to be taking the duel seriously, the sheer power of the spells and the speed of the casting left the audience stunned. Tom Potter-Evans was an incredibly powerful wizard with more than forty-two years of magical experience over his opponent. However, Harry had survived and thrived in the most Darwinian of environments, combat.



The twins and most of the onlookers were surprised when Harry switched gears after the first ten minutes of the fight. So far, his tactics had been rather standard, if a bit more powerful than what the students would have seen in school. A sudden flurry of spells clashed with Tom's shields, setting off a brilliantly display of sparks and flares. The spectators put up their hands too late as the lights blinded them.

The mass of light spells also blocked Tom's sight for a moment.

As his eyesight returned, Thomas Potter saw Harry cast a spell that caused a thick sheet of ice to form around his Uncle Tom's feet.

Tom seemed to notice the ice at about the same time. "Didn't you do this at that first duel at Hogwarts? Nothing new?" Tom called mockingly. With a gesture, Tom melted the ice and freed his feet.

Then Tom said, "You'll have to do better than that, Harry!" Unfortunately, it came out in a squeaky voice, almost as if he had been sucking on a helium balloon.

"That wasn't water ice, was it?" the squeaky voice asked.

"Oops," Harry grinned. Tom swayed briefly as the lack of oxygen got to him. A quick Bubblehead Charm returned his air supply.

The twins started to laugh realizing the ice had actually been frozen helium.

Harry seemed pleased with himself until Tom sent a silent and wandless Summoner at him. Since the spell had no visible light, Harry was caught by surprise as he flew through the air. His Unspeakable and battle robes were charmed to be unsummonable. Forgetting he was not wearing either, he forgot to shield himself from the basic charm.

Harry twisted in the air to conjure a large pillow at Tom's feet.. Shields prevented Tom's follow on spells from landing a hit as Harry flew towards the pillow. Harry's second purpose in conjuring the pillow was discovered as he landed.

The pillow burst filling the air with small goose feathers directly in between Tom and Harry. Father and son grinned briefly at one another through the cloud of feathers. Neither wizard noticed the spectators laughing and clapping. Instead, they launched into new attacks.

Tom launched a series of Stunners and Disarming Spells at his prone father. Rather than pull back or erect shields, Harry reacted as a true Gryffindor.

He went forward.

A quick roll brought him almost to Tom's feet where an Incarcerous charm wrapped Tom in thick bands of steel.

The spectators were stunned as the unknown wizard defeated their Minister, and in many cases, former professor. Then Jimmy and Sally were the first off their benches in cheering their new big brother. Thomas and Al were right behind them. The cheering woke the rest of the crowd that started cheering the victor.

The cheering crowd missed the approach of the single old witch on the pitch to the two combatants.

"I'm disappointed in the pair of you," an old woman's voice said from behind Harry. "You two were playing instead of really dueling. I'm a bit rusty but I think I can still cast a spell or two."

"Are you sure?" they heard Harry ask. "It has been a while for you and this is just an exhibition. Not real training."

"Someone has to remind the pair of you this isn't a game."

Harry's grin grew as he rolled to the side and out from between Tom and Christina. "Try not to break him. He has to go to work in the morning," Harry quipped.

It was a very different feeling when Tom and Christina took their positions. The twins sensed the change but not the reason for it. The magic in the air had a sense of restrained tension where before the magic felt...playful would be the best word to describe it.

Al noticed Hermione and the other Grangers sitting nearby with very concerned expressions on their faces. He didn't blame them. Not long ago they hadn't known she was even a witch, let alone a former Dark Witch. Now they didn't know what to expect.

Al settled in to watch the duel as his grandfather sat down next to him. He noticed Harry sitting with his wand held discretely in his hand. Having just met the man, Al didn't know him well, but Al Potter had grown up in a household of Aurors. He knew when a wizard was poised to attack instantly. Al assumed his grandfather was not entirely trusting of Christina's 'conversion'.

Muggles had a saying, "Trust but verify."

Or, as Moody would say, "CONSTANT VIGILANCE!"

Flitwick again started the duel. The twins had no idea what to expect now. Although some of their father's stories mentioned Christina, Uncle Tom's stories never mentioned her. All they really knew was she served Grindelwald and was an expert fighter.

The two combatants first cast some testing spells. Where Harry moved and dodged the spells, Christina used her shields to redirect Tom's spells over her head.

The spellwork in this fight was sudden and brutal. Christina may have been out of practice after fifty years as a Muggle, but her instincts remained. Al felt that Uncle Tom could probably overpower her quickly; but, she managed to quickly show that she wasn't a push over.

Christina's shields absorbed Tom's initial testing spells without a quiver. Then, at a muttered word, the ground at Tom's feet exploded sending dirt and small rocks everywhere. Tom was thrown into the air by the explosion. His shields blocked the actual debris, but the sheer force pushed him up into the air.

Tom landed awkwardly on his left leg. Even from a distance, Al could have sworn he heard the leg snap on impact.

The old witch wasn't finished yet. While Tom tried to recover, she animated some of the larger rocks into four dog-like forms that charged Tom with gravelly barks.

Tom cast a limited Petrificus Totalus on his leg to support it. He pushed himself up as the rock dogs approached him. A wandless Banisher sent the first one crashing back into its fellows.

Three of the dogs got tangled amongst themselves. Tom sent a Slicing Curse that cleaved through all three, cutting them in half.

The fourth and final dog was closing on Tom when he Banished it almost into Christina's lap as the witch stepped out of the way.

The former Dark Witch was about to launch another attack when the rock dog smashed into her back knocking her to the ground. The dog wrapped its mouth around her wrist and held her wand to the ground.

Flitwick declared Tom the winner as Harry went over to help Christina up. Tom called the rock dog to let her go. The animated rock ran over to Tom acting like a real puppy.

Al and Thomas followed Harry onto the pitch. They heard the witch's muttering about how Uncle Tom had taken over her 'dog' but Harry interrupted her thoughts. "You'll have to ask him later," Harry answered. "For now I think Hermione's getting ready to have a nervous breakdown."

Christina followed Harry's gaze to where a very nervous Granger family was holding back the younger, brown-haired witch. "Hermione has always been a source of pride but a bit too much like my oldest sister." Harry smiled at the gruffly affectionate tone.

Harry was about to reply when he noticed Hermione breaking free of her parents. Recognizing the expression on her face, Harry said, "Well, I think I'll go visit with Dumbledore. Then maybe visit London. At least until she calms down."

Seeing her granddaughter, Christina called, "Coward!" after him. He just waved without turning around as he heard Hermione start to loudly tear into both her grandmother and Tom for their foolishness.

The twins smirked at one another and followed their grandfather's lead.

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### Present Time

"You have Hermione's grandmother training us?" Thomas asked in surprise.

Al looked as surprised as his brother did. "Are you sure that is a good idea, Gramps? Dad told us a bit about what she did during the war. She sounds very Dark."

"In Muggle terms, Christina was a soldier," Harry answered. "She did her job very well. But she never exceeded the parameters of her mission. The Death Eaters and many of the Dark Army would kill indiscriminately any one that got in their way."

Harry paused for a second as he searched for the right phrasing. "They enjoyed the pain and suffering they caused. Christina wanted the challenge of the fight. She never used any of the really Dark magics. I respected her skills and I can't think of anyone else that won't be missed to train the four of you right."

### 22 June 1998

Harry arrived in his Unspeakable cloak at the Department of Mysteries private Apparition point. It said something that his cloak from fifty years ago was still the current Unspeakable uniform.

The Unspeakables guarding the entrance made no move to stop Harry's entry. If the wards didn't react, then you must be on the approved entry list. For the thousandth time, Harry thought how the lack of those same wards at the end of his Fifth year showed how deeply Voldemort had penetrated the Department.

Harry walked past his old Ministry office and into the waiting area outside Croaker's office. The same office used to belong to Cain. Able's old office was just across the hall.

Croaker appeared in his office door. "Come in Count. I understand you got started early. Have a seat."

Harry followed the Head of the Unspeakables into the office. Compared to other offices for Department Heads, the office was rather small and plain, but organized very functionally. A small round table sat away from the desk with four chairs around it. Harry took one of the chairs and sat down.

"I remember seeing you once in the hall, Count," Croaker said as he sat down opposite Harry. "I was just finishing my training when you left on your final mission to Germany. Did you know that we still use your missions as case studies during training?"

"Really?" Harry asked in surprise. "I'd think you would use something more current."

"We haven't faced a Dark Lord since Grindelwald. A couple of Dark Wizards cropped up but they never amounted to much. We helped the Americans with a spot of trouble but that was more a joint training exercise than a real fight. Most of our staff now focuses on magical research and design."

Croaker leant forward in his chair. "This prophecy concerns me. It feels like we are on the cusp of something major."

"Do you really think history is trying to correct itself? That an intelligence is behind it?" Harry asked.

Croaker shook his head. "Personally? If you mean in a God-like role, then no. Something though has to give the seers and prophets their insights. Certain things have stayed oddly in synch with the history you know from the old timeline.

"Frankly, I'm more concerned with the historical forces that may be at work. Tom has done a lot over the past twenty years to bring the magical world into the 20th century. The Muggle Protection Laws and the Ethical Treatment of Non-Human Magical Intelligent Creature Act has annoyed many of the old guard conservatives. A lot of power has flowed from the old families into the 'new money' families. This prophecy was the last sign I needed to know that there is a major

storm brewing. And my gut tells me it has fifty plus years of pressure behind it.

"That is why I want you to put together a team. Whatever happens I expect you are going to be at the center of it."

"So, why have us be unofficial, really?"

Croaker smirked mirthlessly. "A really bad hunch. Something is happening in the Ministry, but I can't put my finger on it. No evidence, but something is rotten in Denmark." Croaker raised an interrogative eyebrow. "You are aware that Barty Crouch Sr. is the prime candidate to become the new Minister?"

"So I've heard."

"He was a very hardcore, Anti-Dark Auror before he went into the Ministry's bureaucracy. Very much a 'Law-and-Order' conservative. He controls a solid voting bloc of the Wizengamot. He is using the inclusion of Dirk Cresswell, the Head of the Goblin Liaison Office, as his potential Senior Undersecretary to moderate his position for the election. This should bring him enough votes to secure the Ministry."

"I've heard of Cresswell but haven't met him before," Harry admitted.

"Does very well with the goblins. He's gotten more cooperation out of them over the last several years than we've ever seen before," Croaker admitted. "I don't know how much influence he'll have in a Crouch Ministry but it should be something."

"He is not too fond of your son. He saw Tom as a block to his rise in power. He'll say all the right things in public, but in private is a whole other matter."

Harry nodded, "Good to know. Do you think he is involved with whatever you think is going on?"

Croaker rubbed the side of his face in frustration. "Merlin, I wish I knew. Some of the signs say yes, but most of them come back negative. Since we can't work domestically without the Wizengamot's approval, I've tried to give the DMLE some of my suspicions Madam

Bones promised they would look into the issue but I think she believes it was all in my imagination.”

Harry sat quietly for a moment thinking about the scenario that had been laid out before him. “So you also want me to secretly look into the possibility of a conspiracy inside the Ministry? How should I do this from Hogwarts?”

Croaker spread his hands wide in a magnanimous gesture. “I’ll leave that up to you. What I don’t know, I can’t tell.”

Harry gave him a lop-sided grin. “Complete deniability on this one, hm. Well, okay. I was never very good at following someone else’s orders anyway.”

“So I’ve read from my predecessors” notes,” Croaker answered dryly. Harry blithely ignored that.

“Al and Thomas will be giving their resignations to their supervisors later today. I’ve also recruited two more to round out the team.”

“Who?”

“Fred and George Weasley. Oh, and they are going to need access through the DoM wards.”

If pushed Harry would later admit to taking an evil delight in watching Croaker’s face at the announcement that the infamous Weasley twins would have access to his domain.

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### 25 June 1998 – Hogsmeade

The Weasley and Potter twins settled into chairs in the dining room of Harry’s house. All four young wizards had arrived that morning with trunks to begin their training. Dobby had shown them to their assigned rooms and then promptly shooed them out so he could unpack properly.



“Okay, here is the plan,” Harry started. “Fred and George, you still have your store to run. Have you hired the additional help you need to run the store?”

“Yes, we have the counter help but-“

“We still need time to develop new products-“

“Without that we will go out of business.”

“Knock that off,” Harry grinned. “You’ll have that time. From 7-9 each morning you will be here getting trained. When not training, I want you two mad geniuses to use the facilities here to develop new weapons for us. You can use toned down versions for your new pranks.”

Fred pretended to wipe tears from his eyes. “George, he called us geniuses.”

George pretended to blow his nose, “And mum said we were a lost cause.”

Tom and Al grinned and together said, “She was right.”

The Weasley twins glared across at their cousins of a sort. Harry groaned. ‘Why did I think this was a good idea?’

Harry quickly diverted attention away from the impending twin war. “Tom and Al, you’re lined up to attend the open try-outs for the Quidditch League. Frankly, it is not important that you get positions, just that you have a visible, credible reason for leaving the Ministry. The Quidditch League Commissioner was delighted to get your letters of interest. Quidditch practices usually start at seven in the morning and run till noon. You will then have training here from 15:00 to 17:00.”

The Potter twins looked ready to celebrate their cover until they heard what their training schedule would be. Harry’s innocent smile did nothing to make them feel better.

"I have also procured four pairs of Vanishing Cabinets. Each set will have one located in this house. One is located in Slytherin's library in the Chamber of Secrets. If you need to get to Hogwarts quickly in an emergency only, you will be able to use this. The second cabinet is in the house I just purchased next door to this one. The third one will be in the study of Potter Manor. And the final one will be at WWW in the development lab."

The Weasley twins looked ready to celebrate. "So we can just pop back and forth?" George asked.

Harry nodded. "It will even go through Hogwart's wards so no temporary wards can block them. I did cast wards on the cabinets so only we can open them. Enough power to force them open will also destroy the cabinet's magical properties."

"Why did you buy the house next door?" Thomas asked.

"Even though the house is under a Fidelius Charm, that doesn't stop people from tracking us up to the charm boundary. I've been seen dozens of times wandering around this area. Someone looking for me would be sure to think about the possibility of a hidden house in the area.

"The other house gives me a legal address and purpose to be seen here," Harry answered. "It gives our opponents something to watch that they understand so they won't dig deeper."

"Very Slytherin of you," Thomas said with approval.

Al ignored his snake brother, "Opponents? Do you think the other side is on the move then?"

Harry shrugged. "This is my third prophecy. I've learnt two major things. The first is don't take them too seriously. They never play out like you'd expect or mean what you think. The second one is our side always gets them after the Darkness is growing. Voldemort had been on the move for ten years before that prophecy was revealed and I wasn't born for another year yet. So, yes, I'm pretty sure the other side is already moving and organized.

“The prophecy is in the open, so our opponents are just as aware of it as we are. In fact, they may understand it better because they know what their goals are. All we can do for now is prepare and keep our eyes and ears open.”

### 31 July 1998

The extended Potter clan gathered at Potter Manor to celebrate Harry's birthday. In his original timeline, this would have been Harry's 18th birthday. Physically, it was closer to his 20th, while emotionally it was probably his 31st.

Lily went all out for her son's "first" birthday. Harry had left on his trip before his last birthday so Lily was trying to make up for eighteen years of missed birthdays. It was too much for Harry but he would never dream of saying as much to Lily. She may not be the same person that gave her life to save Harry, but at the same time, she was in a way. This Lily was the person his mother would have been without the war. Emotionally, *she* was his mother.

The manor was filled with Potters and their relatives. Harry wanted to ask that everyone wear a nametag to keep them all straight. For a man raised as an orphan, the large number of family members was bewildering. Knowing that many of the people wondering around were his own grandchildren made talking to the strangers even stranger.

Katie's son and daughter had recently returned to England on holiday. Mary Prewett worked at the Salem Magical Medical Center just outside Boston. She had been a Ravenclaw three years behind Harry's parents at Hogwarts. The serious young man with Potter hair was Don Prewett. Don worked at the Western Africa Magical Institute as the Potions Master. Specializing in the treatment for, and use of Nundu breath and other parts, Don was developing an international reputation as an academic researcher. In fact, the Hogwarts's DADA professor Harry would be replacing planned to join Don's research team for the next year.

Also making the trip to meet their grandfather for the first time were Michael's two sons, Robert and Samuel. Robert Potter lived in an artist colony in Northwestern Canada. Made up of both magical and

muggle artists, the colony lived in a world of its own. The forty-something artist specialized in the creation of ice sculptures and then charming them in a variety of ways. For Harry's birthday, Robert created a hollowed-out ice phoenix with a charm on it to never melt. Then he filled the inside of the sculpture with an everlasting fire. Harry could honestly say he had never seen something so exquisite in his life.

Samuel Potter was the polar opposite of his slightly older brother. Samuel was a former star Beater for England with a loud and gregarious personality. After his retirement from playing, Samuel took the position as manager for the Fitchburg Finches. The Fitches played in a small New England town not far from the wizard capital of the United States, Boston. Samuel's outgoing personality and style fit his new team perfectly. The fact he could drag his injured players to be looked after by his cousin, Mary Prewett at Salem Med was an added bonus.

Including himself, Harry counted nineteen Potters and Prewetts. This number included his parents (two), siblings (two), his children (five), his grandchildren (eight) and a great-grandchild. The Weasleys were out in force as well. Ron had brought Hermione while the twins had brought Angelina and Alicia. When you included spouses, girlfriends, boyfriends, and family friends, the total number at the manor approached fifty people.

The party started with an informal lunch in the garden behind the manor. Harry acquired a 'date' for the party in the form of eleven year-old Michele. Still believing Harry was in fact her cousin, she took it on herself to introduce Harry around the party. Her honest belief of Harry's origins kept the non-Potter Clan guests from questioning Harry about his previous whereabouts.

Mostly

Molly Weasley remained a force to be reckoned with.

"So Harry dear, where have you been all this time?"

Harry smiled at the woman that had been his surrogate mother in the previous timeline.

“Well Mrs. Weasley...”

“Call me Molly, dear.”

“Okay, Molly. I’d rather this didn’t go too far, but I had a medical issue that kept me from being here. The issue was only resolved relatively recently so I could be here.” It was all true, from a certain point of view as Obi-Wan Kenobi or Albus Dumbledore would have claimed. The medical issue was his parents were dead before.

“Oh, you poor thing! Are you okay now?”

Yes, Mrs... Molly, I’m fine now.

“That’s good. I know your mum has been so excited to have you home finally. I understand you are going to be teaching at Hogwarts this year?”

“Professor Dumbledore asked me just before his passing. Tom insisted I take the position after he became Headmaster,” Harry confirmed.

“The Minister is a good man. I know Arthur will miss having him run the Ministry. But I think the Professor would be relieved to know his school is in good hands.”

Harry resisted a smirk at the thought of the Albus from the first timeline learning that his successor as Headmaster would be Voldemort would say.

“Yes, I think he would.”

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Harry spent a good amount of time getting to know his grandchildren that had moved to the colonies. Robert was particularly fascinating for Harry to talk to about his art.

In neither of his previous ‘lives’ had Harry really looked at magical art. It was not on the Hogwarts curriculum when Harry attended. The

wars with Voldemort and Grindelwald absorbed too much of his time and effort to pay attention to magical art.

Robert spoke very passionately about his art. Harry was surprised to learn his grandson was ranked as a Master Enchanter. Robert had started working out of Phoenix for a company developing enchanted objects for the home, but left after about five years.

“We were only translating muggle devices into their magical equivalents,” Robert explained. Harry could see Michael’s son was an idealist. “We never got to try to create anything new, something beyond what the muggle science could already do. They only wanted ideas that had a proven marketability, not true research. And I love Uncle Tom but I refuse to work for the Ministry.”

Harry was intrigued and asked questions about Robert’s art and the research ideas he had. The conversation lasted almost an hour before Harry realized he was being rude to the other guests. The two men agreed to meet for lunch the next day at the Three Broomsticks.

Harry found he was looking forward to it as he moved off to talk with the other guests.

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The Quidditch Pitch saw a great deal of use during the afternoon of the birthday. Samuel was officiating a Weasley v. Potter match. For the Weasleys, Ron was Keeper, Fred and George at Beater, Ginny, Percy and Bill at Chaser with Charlie as Seeker. Opposing them was Don as Keeper, Al and Thomas at Beater, Robert, Mary, and Melissa as Chasers and Harry as Seeker.

Charlie Weasley loudly moaned about missing the chance to show his successor as the Gryffindor Seeker who was still the best. Al smiled innocently and said he wanted to give the Birthday boy a shot first.

Charlie’s complaints abruptly stopped five minutes into the match. It could have been his recognition of Harry’s skills. And it was, indirectly. Mostly, it was a ground that stopped the complaints.

Harry smiled at Charlie's complaints and took to the air. After so many years with his Firebolt, the broom seemed to know what Harry wanted to do before he did now. Harry trailed along behind Charlie for a bit, shadowing his movements. Then he started moving across the pitch in an oh-so casual manner whilst glancing over his shoulder at Charlie.

When the two "accidently" made eye-contact, Harry suddenly dashed across the pitch towards the far-end goals. With a shout Charlie shot after him. Harry followed the Snitch up in a steep climb over the goals. Don moved out of the way as the two Seekers flashed by him, Charlie hot on Harry's bristles. Harry made a grab at the Snitch but missed when it suddenly reversed direction. The Firebolt spun in a tight turn and dove down to the ground. The sudden change in direction caught Charlie by surprise but he stayed tight on Harry.

Charlie opened his eyes and was looking up at his siblings and Harry.

"What happened? Why am I on the ground?" he mumbled.

"Twelve o'clock Charlie forgot to pull up," Bill grinned down at him.

"Did we forget to tell you-"

"That Harry here is really good at Wronski Feints?" Fred and George innocently asked.

"Or is it Faints?" Al asked. "'Cause I think he fainted before hitting the ground."

Charlie ignored some good-natured ribbing before his Aunt Katie allowed him back into the air. Charlie thought he would get some of his own back when his Aunt Katie started yelling at Harry for pulling off such a dangerous stunt in a friendly match.

Most of the Weasleys were surprised when Harry grinned throughout her lecture. It was generally agreed the Aunt Katie was right scary when she went into her Healer mode. So Harry's reaction to the chewing out stunned them.

"I do not want to see that kind of thing again! Do you understand me?" Katie all but yelled at Harry. She was even doing the finger-pointing thing.

Harry's grin grew wider. "Okay Katie. Whatever you say. I was raised to respect my elders." Katie blushed as her mind caught up to her temper and realized this was not one of her nephews she was yelling at but her own *father*.

The Weasley team was left to wonder why the opponents found the whole scene so funny.



## Chapter 6 – Unspeakable Summer III

17 August 1998

The dark trees of the Forbidden Forest flashed past as the large wolf ran at breakneck speeds. The large predator seemed to fly as it dove over bushes and under fallen trees. A howl from nearby signaled that the wolf was not alone in the night.

The wolf burst into a small clearing as its prey came into sight, a magnificent stag with a full rack. The stag was already in motion as the wolf appeared. It bounded towards the tree line looking for safety. The safety of the trees was an illusion as another large black canine appeared in front of the stag.

The stag never lost stride as it cleared the new threat in a single bound. As it leapt over its attacker, the stag's left rear hoof casually flickered back and caught the canine in the head. The large black dog let out a surprised yelp as it toppled back onto the ground. An odd barking noise was heard from the wolf crossing the field.

With one pursuer down and the other crossing the clearing, the stag dove into the forest. Three bounds into the trees, something impacted solidly with the large deer's body. The stag whirled around to face the new attacker.

Standing there in the faint moonlight that penetrated the forest's canopy was a large wolfish creature. It was covered in fur but its limbs seemed oddly disproportionate. The forelimbs seemed too long and its tail seemed off also.

The stag let out a snort as the near-wolf creature turned and dashed into the woods at high speed with the stag in pursuit. The canine and the wolf joined in on the larger creature's flanks in pursuit of the werewolf.

--BD--

The four animals stood on the edge of the forest as the moon started to set. The large canine dropped to the ground with a whimper, putting its front paws over its head. The other animals seemed

amused until the werewolf started to shake and convulse. The creature let out a loud howl that gradually changed into a groan of pain as the creature's form shifted to that of a middle-aged man. A moment later two more middle-aged men and a much younger man stood where the other animals had been.

"Damn it, Prongs! I think you cracked my skull!" Sirius complained.

"Way too thick, Paddy."

The canine Animagus turned to the speaker as the others laughed. "You! Turning into a bat when you are 'it' is not fair!"

"I only flew over the gorge," Harry protested with a smile.

Sirius was not appeased. "And having two Animagus forms is so not fair too!"

"So not fair?" Remus snorted, "What are you, Sirius, six?"

"Mentally," the Potters chorused.

Sirius sputtered indignantly as the other three men laughed. "Fine," he huffed, "but for that, you buy breakfast!"

Harry laughed as the four men started walking towards Hogsmeade. It had been an enjoyable night running through the Forbidden Forest with the three Marauders. Hearing the stories from Remus and Sirius in the original timeline did not do the experience of running with the Marauders justice. It was so much better.

Harry saw more of the Forest last night than ever before. It was much larger than just the environs of Hogsmeade. Miles of untouched land sat in the area known as the Forbidden Forest. According to Remus, the ancient druids had set the large area aside two thousand years ago as a preserve for magical creatures. An ancient form of the Notice-Me-Not charm prevented the Muggles from wandering in or trying to build too close to the Forest.

The three men had shown Harry many of the hidden hollows and glens that almost no other humans had seen before. The only areas

they avoided were the centaur village and the Acromantulas' nest. Harry saw enough of the latter in his Second year.

"Bloody Potters always sticking together," Sirius muttered.

Remus's lycanthrope-enhanced hearing heard him. "So, Sirius, how was your date the other night with Mary?"

Harry could see Sirius blush in the dim morning light. James laughed, "Sirius, you old dog. You had a hot night out and didn't bring it up? So who's Mary?"

"Damn it, Moony," Sirius groaned.

Harry grinned at Sirius's response. "Ooh, there is a story here."

"It was only a couple of dates! This mangy werewolf is just trying to start trouble!"

"A Marauder trying to start trouble?" James asked in mock surprise. "How can you say such a thing Padfoot?" James laughed at the dirty look Sirius threw him. "So, who is Mary? Do I know her?" he asked innocently.

"Yes, you bloody know her!" Sirius snapped. Then he sighed and his shoulders slumped. "Mary Prewett."

James stopped in his tracks. "My cousin Mary?" he asked in an incredulous tone. "The same Mary you teased unmercifully for the four years she was at school with us?"

"Yes, I am dating your cousin Mary," Sirius growled defensively. "We've gone out four times since she got back. We ... like each other. Do you have a problem with that, Prongs?"

James Potter smiled like butter wouldn't melt in his mouth. "I have no problem with that. Why would I care that you are dating my Aunt Katie's only daughter? I think it is a wonderful thing." Sirius glared at James in mixed surprise and suspicion. He opened his mouth to say something when James held up one hand and smiled. "I have no

problem whatsoever. Her grandfather on the other hand may have some questions for you though.”

Harry stood silently throughout the exchange. One thought kept running through his mind. ‘Only me. Only Harry Potter would have his godfather dating his granddaughter’.

James’s comment snapped him out of it. He gave James a dirty look and said, “She is your great-granddaughter.”

“Biologically, maybe. She has been my ‘cousin’ since I was four. I can’t think of her that way,” was the cheerful response.

Sirius was banging his head against a nearby tree and muttering. Harry caught a couple of the words. He snorted, “Relax, Sirius. I’m not going to challenge you to a duel on the spot.”

The older man looked up with a grin. “I can’t relax. I’m Sirius.” Harry suppressed a groan at the overused pun. Their other two companions just shook their heads.

Harry allowed a cold, deadly smile to cross his face. “No, I’m serious. But if you are dating her and I catch you *sniffing* around other women, you’ll be dead Sirius.”

“He’ll have to *collar* his instincts,” Remus supplied.

“I think being with Mary will be good for Padfoot,” James deadpanned. “It will give him a new *leash* on life.”

“Stop it!” Sirius said as he winced.

Remus looked at the two Potters. “Guys, I think maybe we should stop *hounding* him.”

“He is looking a bit *grim*,” James added.

Harry nodded in agreement. “Otherwise, he’ll just *mutt-er* through breakfast.”

Sirius glared at Harry. "I used to like you." Harry grinned at him unrepentantly.

They were approaching the Three Broomsticks by now. Remus and James were leading the way in when Harry grabbed Sirius's shoulder and wrapped him in a hug. "Welcome to the family, old dog."

Harry released him and started into the inn while Sirius stood there in shock.

The Animagus turned pale and protested, "We're only dating!"

Harry turned in the doorway with a smile and a quick wink. Then he turned and walked through the door leaving a slightly scared Sirius Black staring after him.

--BD--

19 August 1998

The pair of purple lights passed over Harry's head as he ducked out of the way. He dropped to the floor into a roll. A pink bolt of light came out of his wand even while he was rolling. A squawk of indignation erupted from the light's target.

"Oi, Gramps! That's low!" the target protested. The wizard was now dressed in a short, tight Muggle dress and his anatomy had apparently also been altered to properly fill it out. Any Muggle could have identified it as a cheerleading outfit.

"I don't know. That looks rather fetching on you. Can I have a date?" The target glared at his twin brother.

Harry wandlessly cancelled the clothes-altering spell after regaining his feet. He considered his two grandsons across the dueling room. "The point of that was not to let your guard down, Al. You assumed I couldn't get a spell off while dodging. I admit, it was a low-probability hit, but I still did it."

Al was muttering something about a 'freak of nature' when his brother asked, "What was that spell? Fred and George use potions to do the

same thing. We did general clothes altering spells in Transfiguration but that one seemed different,”

“It’s from Teen Witch Weekly, complements of Ms. Lavender Brown” Harry grinned.

“Lavender Brown?” Thomas asked in disbelief. “Wasn’t she the one that asked you to take her to the Yule Ball three years in a row?”

“My stalker is a better way of putting it,” Al confirmed. “What does the former official Hogwarts Gossipmonger have to do with that spell?”

“My Sixth year, I was confined to the Hospital Wing for a week. Lavender was recovering from wizarding flu at the same time. Madam Pomfrey put her in the bed next to mine. For five days I was subjected to her babble about beauty tips, dating do’s and don’ts, and magical personality tests. It was worse than a Crucio” The twins laughed at the mental picture Harry drew.

“When I got out of Madam Pomfrey’s captivity, Draco Malfoy tried to hex me. I hit him with that spell and one that turned his hair orange. I actually cast the spells on a belt he was wearing so five minutes after he cancelled the spells’ effects with a Finite, it came back.

“However, the point here is you can use many common charms and spells to unexpected effect during a fight. They aren’t legal in a duel, but a true fight has only one rule.”

“To survive” the twins chorused.

“Exactly,” Harry agreed. “Most of the common fighting spells take a fair bit of power to cast where household charms are designed to be usable by the weakest witch or wizard. You can cast a lot of them with little power drain but it looks impressive to your opponents.”

Harry smirked at Al. “Plus if you hit, it often works as a great distraction.” Al could only smile in rueful agreement.

“Now, I want you two to face off. I want no shields, dodging only. The only offensive spells I want to see are household-type charms. Be

creative. The winner gets to watch the loser do it again with me whilst holding a camera.”

A slight pop announced the arrival of Dobby. “Master Harry Potter, sir. A pair of Aurors is at your other house wanting to see you.”

A frown crossed Harry’s face. What could the Aurors want with him?

Harry looked down at the excitable elf. “Thank you, Dobby. Please invite them into the living room and I will be there shortly.” Dobby nodded enthusiastically and popped away.

To the twins, he said, “You two keep practicing. I’ll be back shortly.”

After a quick stop in his room to get changed from his dueling gear, Harry walked out to the hall and opened the appropriate Vanishing Cabinet for his public house in the village.

The public house was just across the lane from the house Harry bought in 1933. It was a slightly smaller house built at the same time. Decorated in style that screamed out young, bachelor wizard, the furniture was all bought second hand and was slightly scruffy. The kitchen was rather bare with minimal food in the cupboards; mostly butterbeer, peanut butter, cheese and some slightly off milk. It was known that Dobby worked for Harry after the incident at Hogwarts, so the elf was allowed to keep the house clean.

Harry stepped out of the Cabinet into ‘his’ bedroom. Two other identical wardrobes stood closer to the bedroom door but these were normal cabinets filled with clothes. Harry occasionally slept here to allow his magical signature to imprint on the room. It helped build his cover in case anyone ever thought to check it.

Affecting the drowsy air of a recently awakened wizard, Harry walked into the living room. He immediately recognized Kingsley Shacklebolt, but failed to recognize the other wizard.

“Sorry to keep you waiting. It was a late night last night.” Harry said as an explanation. He stuck his hand out and said, “I’m Harry Potter. What can I do for the Auror Corps this morning?”

Kingsley took Harry's hand, saying, "I am Auror Shacklebolt. This is Investigator Fenton. We're sorry to disturb you but we have a few questions."

"Of course, please have a seat." As they sat down Harry called for Dobby and ordered tea for the three of them. Harry noticed that while Fenton sat in a seat near Harry, Kingsley sat further away and with the side with his wand holster clear. Dobby was back in seconds with the tea and biscuits.

Speaking for the first time, Investigator Fenton said, "Mr. Potter, we are investigating the death of Albus Dumbledore. We understand you were in the room with him when he died?"

"Investigating Albus's death?" Harry asked in honest shock. "Why would you be investigating his death?"

Fenton shrugged noncommittally. "We cannot comment on any ongoing investigation, but I am sure you are intelligent enough to realize that the very fact we are here tells you some questions have been raised."

Harry actually read quite a bit from the news of this investigation. Neither his son Ron nor his daughter-in-law, Bella, had mentioned this investigation last night at dinner. It made sense that this would be run at a high level, but as the Head Auror under Madam Bones, Ron should still have known about it.

"I will help you in any way that I can," Harry said with no sign of his inner warning signs showing.

"Thank you Mr. Potter. Now, can you explain how you came to be at the conference?" Fenton asked.

"Minister Potter-Evans invited me to join his family in Switzerland. I had been in Egypt working with my cousin Melissa, who is a Gringott's cursebreaker," Harry answered.

"When did you learn of the professor's heart attack?"



“Jonas Potter-Evans came and woke me up. Albus had asked for me after he regained consciousness.”

Fenton leaned forward interestedly, “Why would Professor Dumbledore ask for you in particular to come see him?”

Harry felt a warning tingle against his mental shields. Assuming the investigator was using low-level Legilimency against him in an effort to ascertain the truth, Harry relaxed his shields just enough to allow the man to read his truthfulness. “The professor and I have been friends for years. The Minister and I were his closest friends that were also at the conference. Katie Prewitt was only there so quickly because Fawkes brought her.”

“What is your connection to the Potter family?”

“I’m the son of James and Lily Potter,” Harry answered

“Why didn’t you attend Hogwarts?” Kingsley asked speaking for the first time since sitting down.

“For a couple reasons, I was raised out of the country. I did my training elsewhere. I believe the Ministry has my NEWT scores on record.”

Fenton switched topics again, “You attended the dinner with Professor Dumbledore the night before?”

“Yes.”

“What was discussed at the dinner? How did the professor act?”

“I sat at another table with the younger family members. He seemed fine during dinner. We only spoke briefly as the dinner ended.” Harry paused for a moment. “When he first arrived at the conference he looked a bit peaked. He said he was only tired. He looked much better the night of the dinner.”

“Indeed,” the investigator commented. In a casual voice, Fenton commented, “You received your position as Defense Professor after the professor’s death, correct?”

"Not exactly. Albus approached me before he died." Harry snorted quietly. "Albus asked me and I said I'd think about it. After that he treated it as an agreement. Tom simply formalized it once he assumed the position of Headmaster."

"Why do you think the former Minister resigned to take a lesser position of a school master, even Hogwarts?"

"I doubt Tom sees it as a step down." Harry smiled. "He said it was what Albus would have wanted."

"Would you be willing to take Veritaserum to confirm your answers?" Fenton asked.

Harry nodded slowly. "Yes, under the condition that only pre-scripted questions are asked and either Tom Potter-Evans or Ronald Potter are present as my Advocates the entire time."

Fenton scowled briefly before returning to his bland expression. "That is your right," he agreed.

"If you want to do it, I would ask if we can do it in the next week," Harry requested. At their expressions, Harry explained, "I will be busy with preparing for classes the whole week before Hogwarts starts again. Otherwise, we will have to schedule it around my teaching periods."

"I doubt we can get the appropriate permissions before the end of the week, so it may be after September 1st," Fenton allowed grudgingly it seemed to Harry. Fenton stood up and gestured to Shacklebolt who also stood up.

"Send me an owl if you would like to meet again after the school year starts," Harry offered as he also stood up. A curious expression crossed Harry's face. "I know you won't tell me why you think Albus's death wasn't natural, but when you can would you please do so? Albus was a good friend of my family for a long time. He attended Hogwarts with my grandfather."

Kingsley opened his mouth but snapped it shut at a glare from Fenton. Fenton glanced at Harry. "We will let your family know once our

investigation is complete. Good day, Mr. Potter. Thank you for your time.”

Once the two wizards from the DMLE were out of the house, Harry watched them walk down the lane towards the main part of the village. Something about that visit bothered Harry a great deal. What evidence did they have that Albus was murdered? Did Ron and Bella know about this? And, finally, did this have something to do with the prophecy’s opposition or just a coincidence?

Walking away from the window, Harry shook his head. He didn’t believe in coincidences anymore.

25 August 1998

A beautiful summer morning had dawned over Hogsmeade as Harry started out his door on the way to Hogwarts. Even the Scottish Highlands could get a bit warm in August but the night air still lingered this early in the morning.

“So, do I have to start calling you Professor yet?” a perky voice asked from his side.

Harry smiled down at the petite young Veela-witch skipping alongside him. “Hmm, once we get to the castle, it might not be a bad idea to do that if we run into any other professors. Definitely address them as professor. And don’t forget to wrap the Headmaster around your little finger too.”

Michele giggled at Harry’s comment. “Grandpa will be easy. He told me I look like Grandmum at my age so he is really easy to manipulate.”

“Sounds like you’re a natural for Slytherin,” Harry laughed.

Michele frowned cutely. “I want to be in Ravenclaw. Even if I wanted to be sneaky and manipulative, why would I want to be in Grandpa’s House? Then everyone would know I was sneaky and manipulative!” Harry laughed at Michele’s comment.

Then Michele grinned and added, "Besides, I'm a girl. That should be all the warning they need!" Harry let out a deep belly laugh. He had to hold his sides as his ribs started to ache.

Once he regained control of himself, Harry asked, "So, how many years will it take you to be the undisputed queen of Hogwarts?"

"Three," Michele smiled innocently. "The younger years will be easy, but I figure the three oldest years won't bow down until I'm at least starting my Fourth year."

Harry smirked, "I'll have to start a staff pool. It should be fun to watch." Michele gave up her attempt at remaining serious and giggled. Then she wrapped her arms around Harry's waist in a hug.

--BD--

The pair entered the main entrance of Hogwarts accompanied by a great deal of laughter. Michele had an innocent quality that was coupled with a mischievous streak that Fred and George could appreciate. She kept Harry entertained on their walk with her comments. For a young witch not even at Hogwarts yet, Michele was a good observer of the people around her and her comments were naïve but spot on.

"Students already?" a voice asked as they mounted to steps towards the former location of the second floor girls' bathroom. "Ah, Professor Ev- Potter! Welcome back!"

Harry and Michele turned to see the ghost of "Nearly Headless" Nick floating through a nearby wall. A second ghost followed him just a step behind. This ghost was wearing muddy muggle-style combat fatigues and carried a type of rifle Harry wasn't familiar with. Michele grabbed onto Harry's leg when she noticed this new ghost was completely missing his head.

"Hello, Nick," Harry greeted the ghost. "You are looking well."

"Well, we don't change you know," Nick smiled. "Will things get more exciting now that you've returned, sir?"

Harry only smiled and shrugged. Then he put his hand on Michele's shoulder. "Michele, this is Sir Nicholas de Mimsy Porpington, the Gryffindor ghost."

"It is a pleasure to meet you, Miss Potter."

"Hello," Michele answered in a shy voice. "Who's that?"

The ghost started and said, "Oh, my apologies! May I introduce the newest member of the Headless Hunt? This is Roland from Norway. He was a Muggle-born wizard that was killed in one of the Muggle wars. Not much of a talker now, but a good member of the hunt nevertheless."

Harry nodded politely at the new ghost. "Welcome to Hogwarts, Roland."

"Well, you have much to do, I suppose," Nick said as he waved them off. "Enjoy your time at Hogwarts, my dear. Come along, Roland." The two ghosts floated off although Roland paused long enough to wave good-bye.

Harry and Michele continued on their way to Harry's office. As they approached the office, Harry hissed the password.

"Your password is 'It's me.'?" Michele asked with a giggle.

Harry looked down with mixed amusement and chagrin. "I should have remembered you would understand parseltongue."

The two Potters stepped into Harry's office. Not too much had changed in the office over the last fifty years. The old executive desk and round conference table still sat in the same places. A number of newer titles sat on the bookshelves

Michele looked around the office whilst Harry pulled out his shrunken trunk and enlarged it. The young witch turned to watch as Harry waved his hand and said, "Unpack." The various books, scrolls, and other items inside the trunk flew onto the shelves or into the desk.

Once all of the materials were neatly in their places, Harry winked at Michele and said, "All done!"

"Can you teach me that one, Harry?" Michele asked excitedly. "That would impress my new dorm mates next week!"

"I can do that," Harry agreed. "We can have your first magic lesson. We'll do it when you are ready to pack your stuff for school."

"Thank you, Harry!"

Harry worked for a bit getting things properly sorted before heading down to his classroom. Since he was not using the standard Defense instructor's office, it was a short walk. Michele happily skipped along with him, stopping to look at the paintings, statues and suits of armour they passed along the way. It reminded Harry of walking through the school with Snuffles.

The defense classroom was much the way Harry remembered it, both from his time as a student and as a teacher in the past. A great deal of new equipment sat boxed in front of the professor's desk. Harry ordered much of it at his own expense as a donation to the school. Much of the old equipment had dated from Tom's tenure as Defense professor and was showing a great deal of wear.

Michele was helping Harry unpack when she quietly asked, "Who are you really, Harry?"

Harry hid his surprise and asked, "What do you mean?"

"Uncle James and Aunt Lily say you are their son, but none of them can speak parseltongue. The only Potters that are parselmouths are on Grandpa's side of the family." Michele looked up at Harry. "I know Grandpa and all my aunts and uncles trust you, I just want to know why."

Harry started to open his mouth to explain she was too young. But then he closed it. Although she had not yet started school, she was actually older than he was when he faced the troll his First year. Harry sometimes wondered how the original timeline would have

gone if Albus had honestly answered Harry's question at the end of that year.

"Well, I knew you were sharp but I didn't realize quite how sharp," Harry said ruefully as his mind raced.

"Have you ever heard of a TimeTurner?"

Michele nodded her head.

"Before I was born there was a Dark Lord named Voldemort. A prophecy said I was the only one that could kill him. He tried to kill me when I was only 15 months old. He killed my parents, but his magic failed when he tried to kill me. He lost his body but came back when I was 14. A war was fought for the next several years until eventually I won. But all of my family and friends died in the war."

Michele had an odd look on her face. "You're teasing me! That's part of the Harry Potter stories my father told me! The story you're named after!"

Harry wasn't expecting that. He had forgotten the stories of his first timeline were the stuff of bedtime stories now. Harry suppressed a snort as he remembered Ginny's fascination with her old bedtime stories in the original timeline.

"Michele, I know this is hard to accept but I am the real Harry Potter." Seeing the disbelieving look on the witch's face, Harry asked, "How did those stories end?"

"Harry kills the Dark Lord in a big battle."

"But what happened after the battle?"

The little girl shrugged, "I guess he went on with his life."

Harry sighed. "It was a very dark time for me. Everyone I cared about was gone. A year after the battle, a wizard offered me a special TimeTurner that I could use to go far back and stop Voldemort. I used it. I went back and found the Dark Lord when he was a little boy."

"Did you kill him?" Michele whispered the question.

"No," answered a new voice. "He took the little boy in and raised him as his own."

Michele turned around. "Grandpa? It's true? He's the real Harry Potter?" Her jaw dropped in amazement when Tom nodded in confirmation. "But the little boy...?"

Tom walked all the way into the classroom and sat down next to his granddaughter. He gave her a small smile. "Harry raised that little boy as his own and saved him from being a Dark Lord. They had a good life but one day the magic that sent him to the past brought him back to where he started."

"How, Grandpa?"

"I don't know, sweetie. We don't know how the magic worked. But do you know who Harry is now?"

"No."

"When he was in the past he used the name James Evans. And he was my father and Aunt Katie's, Aunt Tia's and Uncles Ron and Michael too."

Michele looked at her grandfather in disbelief. Then she turned to stare at Harry. "Is that true? Are you really my great-grandpa?"

Harry smiled. "In all the ways that count."

Michele started to smile, but suddenly turned back to Tom. "Grandpa, you would have been a Dark Lord?!"

A sad look crossed Tom's face. "If Dad hadn't saved me, I would have hated everyone and done very bad things," he confirmed. "But it is our choices that make us who we are and my Dad gave me a lot of new choices to make."

Michele walked over and wrapped Tom in a hug. "I love you, grandpa."



Tom smiled and hugged her back. "I love you too, munchkin."

Then she ran over and wrapped Harry in one. "Thank you for saving my grandfather." Harry was a bit overwhelmed and simply hugged her back. Without letting go, Michele asked, "Is this why I heard the twins calling you Gramps?"

Harry snorted his amusement and said, "Yes."

Michele smiled up at Harry and said, "Good, then I will too!"

As much as Harry wanted to protest, he found he couldn't refuse the little girl. It had nothing to do with her veela powers. It was simply the skill of a girl wrapping a grandfather around her little finger. Thank Merlin she had no leanings to the Dark.

"You do that."

--BD--

### 30 August 1998

Harry walked down Diagon Alley late on a Sunday afternoon. Not many shoppers remained on the Alley compared to what it had seen just a few hours ago. The rush to get school supplies had one day left to go now. But the traffic was now much lighter as many made their way home for supper. The late afternoon London sun cast long shadows across the Alley.

After the past week of preparing his lessons, his classroom, and training with the two sets of twins, Harry was enjoying his wanderings through the alley. He had no real agenda, no mad shopping sprees to perform.

Passing Fortescue's Ice Cream Parlor, Harry heard, "Oi, Harry! Over here!"

Harry turned to see his brother Jimmy sitting with Ron Weasley and Neville Longbottom were sitting at a table with empty bowls in front of them.

Harry wandered over, shaking his head. "Isn't this where I found you the last time? It's a wonder we don't need to roll the three of you down the alley."

"It's tradition!" Ron proclaimed. "Every summer we start with a trip to Fortescue's and we end in the same way."

"You seem to be missing half your crew," Harry observed.

"Ginny and Sally are trying on all their new clothes again so they can make sure they don't need to pick up anything new before the Express on Tuesday," Jimmy answered.

"Mione is working a shift at the DMLE," Ron muttered around a mouthful of ice cream. "She's jumped into learning her new job like she studied for NEWTS!"

Neville shrugged. "Hannah's having dinner with her folks. Besides, with all of the other girls not coming she told me I could have a guys night."

Ron let out a cough that sounded suspiciously like "Whipped!" Neville gave Ron a dirty look. Ron simply laughed until he heard a very familiar voice coming from behind him.

"Honestly Ron, would you please grow up! And your table manners are simply atrocious!"

The frightened redhead jumped out of his chair and started to apologize to his girlfriend before he even finished turning. He was confused for a moment when she wasn't there. Then he heard the others start laughing behind him.

Ron turned back to them red faced but laughing. "Okay, you got me. Bastards."

Harry winked at Jimmy as he slipped his wand back into his holster.

"Well, if you gentlemen are at loose ends for the night, we are having a Muggle-film night tonight at my place," Harry offered.

"Muggle-movies?" Neville asked. "I've heard of them but isn't your house magical?"

Harry nodded. "Yes, but I bought a magical version of a telly and a video. A Canadian Muggle-born missed his films so he figured out a way to get a 'kind of' projection pensieve to read off tapes and DVD's. So no electronics to get messed up."

"Mum took Sally and I to see a couple when we were kids," Jimmy said. "What are you watching?"

"I picked up the new video for tonight. It is The Princess Bride. We watched the Star Wars trilogy last week. Great film."

Neville laughed, "I have no idea what you just said, but I'm up for it." The other two quickly joined in and soon all four wizards were making their way to the Apparition point.

--BD--

Harry led the other three wizards to his official house in Hogsmeade. Of the group, only Jimmy knew this wasn't Harry's real house and even he didn't know the secret of its location.

They were early for everyone else to arrive but Dobby had already laid out the snacks including a butterbeer, cokes, and nachos.

"Wow," Ron commented looking at all the food. "How many people are coming?"

"Both sets of twins plus the Marauders. Tom might be coming too."

"Will the house still be standing in the morning?" Jimmy quipped.

"Should we take that as a challenge--"

"--our dear future brother-in-law"

"at least once he gets around to asking her,"

"You'd think he do it soon if those noises we overhead meant what we think they mean."

"Well said, brother."

The group turned to see Fred and George stepping into the room. Jimmy started blushing furiously at the twins' innuendo.

"Wait, what noises?" Ron asked whilst glaring at his best mate.

"Why, the same ones you make with Hermione-

"iclke-Ronnie-kins"

"All grown up"

"Mum would be so proud." The red of Ron's face deepened at the twin's implied threat.

"Are you picking on my son again?" James Potter asked as he walked into the room followed by Sirius and Remus.

"Only for his own good-

"We would never offend-

"an elder statesman of Pranking."

Sirius grinned. "Sounds like a prank war to me, Prongs."

"Only if we get Harry," Albus called as he followed in with his brother behind the Marauders.

"Guess that means I get the Mssers. Weasley," Tom smiled as he removed the disillusionment spell from himself. "Hm, four teams of three."

"That's not fair," Jimmy protested. "You guys are all powerful and I only get these two!" He suddenly turned white as he realized what he had said. Neville reached over and punched Jimmy in the shoulder while Ron threw a pillow at him.

"Thanks, mate."

"Love you too, Jimmy"

Harry cut off the impending prank war. "No pranks in my house or I let Dobby deal with you."

The House-elf in question appeared wearing a perfect Dread Pirate Roberts costume. "Assss yooooouuuu wiiiiish, Master Harry!" The rest of the room watched in shocked silence as Harry started roaring in laughter.

After he recovered, Harry motioned to the filmsieve and said, "Start the film. You'll understand."

The room got quiet as the opening scene started with the grandfather appearing on the wall to read to his grandson.

Halfway through the film, the group was watching Roberts getting drained by the six fingered man's torture device. Thomas leant over to Harry and whispered, "Al and I found our animagus forms." Harry turned to him and asked the question with a raised eyebrow.

Thomas grinned and whispered, "Al's a huge white stallion." The grin grew as Thomas added, "And you can call me Fluffy."

--BD--

1 September 1998

Harry stood on the train platform watching the students saying goodbye to their parents whilst greeting their school friends. He recognized surprisingly few of the students. Not many younger years participated in the DA so he only knew a few of the younger Gryffindors.

A surprising number of Aurors stood watch around the platform. The election was in two weeks and Crouch was running on a "Law and Order" platform. Harry guessed the additional Aurors were to bolster the image the Ministry was "doing something".

Some things never change.

The Unspeakables investigation was still looking for the break they needed. Rumors flew around the Ministry about the publicly revealed

prophecy. Albus and Thomas were working on developing a network of informants whilst the Weasley twins used their business contacts to identify their opposition. So far, nothing positive had been discovered, only vague hints.

Frankly, Harry was starting to think nothing would come up until the other side made their first move.

The DMLE's investigation into the death of Albus Dumbledore was one of the many rumors, never confirmed but never really denied either. Not even Ron Potter, the Head Auror, knew the details of that investigation. His Aurors assigned to the case were Oath-bound not to reveal anything.

The last of the students boarded the train as it started to roll out of the station. A few families remained on the platform as the Express left the station. Harry Apparated to Hogwarts for a final staff meeting before the students arrived.

**A/N2: Some more hints to the plot and a bunch of foreshadowing...**

## Chapter 7 – Professor Potter

1 September 1998

The older students filled the Great Hall in a noisy fashion whilst waiting for the new First years to arrive with Professor McGonagall. It lacked the pure chaos a similar scene would have held with the Weasley twins in attendance, but the Weasley-free Hall was loud enough.

Harry sat talking to Professor Flitwick about the coming year. The two professors had already planned to coordinate some of their spell lessons so the two classes reinforced the skills learnt in the other class. Tom was discussing the Quidditch schedule with Madam Hooch. Snape sat splitting his time scowling at the two men and sneering at the students not in Slytherin. Around the table, the other professors either sat quietly or talking to their neighbors.

The large doors of the Great Hall swung open to admit Professor McGonagall followed by the First year students. It was a rather large group of fifty-two students. That meant each House would be getting thirteen students on average. That was a huge increase when Harry thought about the eight students Gryffindor got his first year.

The Sorting Hat sat on his traditional stool waiting for the new students. His song was rather similar to what Harry heard his first year. At least until it got to the end.

*Now that you know the Houses four,*

*We closed last year with a warning to all,*

*Now I add to Destiny's call.*

*The Houses united must remain,*

*As poles reverse friend becomes enemy,*

*And enemy friend.*

*Open your own mind to choose what's best.*

The students muttered uneasily at the Hat's odd ending. It was relatively mild after some of the Hat's warnings in Harry's student years, but surprising to these students.

Minerva moved to her spot next to the Hat and called the first student, "Adamms, Robert."

A rather tall young man moved over to the Hat and became the first new Ravenclaw of the year. The House clapped politely as he moved away and 'Buckknee, Cynthia' moved to replace him on the stool.

Harry idly watched the Sorting. Since he was not a Head of House, he had no serious interest in where the majority of the students went. At least until Minerva called out, "Potter-Evans, Michele". Tom and Harry exchanged a quick glance.

Michele smiled as she almost skipped over to the Hat. Her Veela-aura wouldn't develop until puberty set in but her enthusiasm brought a smile to more than a few of the older students. She paused to wave at Jimmy, Sally, and their friends, which brought a chuckle from the watching students.

The Hat settled over her eyes. After a moment, the Hat muttered, "Not another one." The staff and the nearby students that overheard started whispering about what it could mean. The Hat's comment quickly made its way around the Hall.

Two minutes passed without a Sorting. Harry noticed Filius had an old-fashioned watch in his hand and he was getting excited. The students muttering grew louder after Michele had been sitting for five minutes. Harry saw her shrug her shoulders. It seemed she and the Hat were arguing about her placement.

Suddenly the Hat yelled out, "Hufflepuff!"

Michele jumped off the stool and placed the Hat back down. She paused to pat it like a puppy before skipping off to the shocked Hufflepuff table. With most of the Potter clan in either Gryffindor or Slytherin, no one expected the new Headmaster and former Head of Slytherin House's granddaughter to be Sorted into the 'Puffs. Only the Headmaster and the new Defense professor were grinning.



“Andrea wins the pool,” Tom commented to Harry.

“I was sure she was headed for Ravenclaw,” Harry said with a fake frown. “After all the questions she asked me when she helped me last week, I was sure of it.”

Pomona Sprout frowned at her new colleague, “Is there something wrong with my House, Professor Potter?”

“Of course not,” Harry smiled. “But I think Michele could have been in any of the four Houses. I would love to know what she and the Hat talked about.”

Professor Sprout seemed a bit mollified. “Hufflepuff does not just get the leftovers.”

“Keep an eye on her for your Quidditch team too,” Harry added. “Her cousin Thomas told me last week she is a better flyer already than he was his first year.”

“Really,” Sprout commented whilst looking across the Hall at her newest student with a predatory expression.

“So, the Potter nepotism continues,” Snape sneered. The other professors ignored him although Sinistra rolled her eyes at the comment.

‘If Bella could change so much in this timeline, why was Snape still such a git?’ Harry wondered to himself.

The remainder of the Sorting went smoothly with no surprises. Tom stood to give his first welcoming speech as the Headmaster of Hogwarts. Harry half listened as he watched the students. Ginny was the new Headgirl and a Ravenclaw boy Harry didn’t know was the Headboy. It was odd to be sitting here looking out at students Harry remembered from his own days as a student. In some ways things felt weirder now than when he taught in the 1930’s.

Jimmy and Ginny were holding hands and making eyes at each other. Jimmy had given her a promise ring on the train to Hogwarts. Arthur knew it was coming because Ron let it slip. He was happy for his

daughter but told Harry he planned on giving Jimmy a hard time when he asked for permission to propose. Harry was just glad he didn't 'feel a monster in his chest' as he watched them

Tom dismissed the students to their dorms as the meal ended. The normal chaos around the main doors ensued as most of the staff left via a private side entrance. Harry sat on the edge of the staff table as he watched the students filtering out of the Hall. Michele waved as she left with the new friends in Hufflepuff. Ginny was busy with the Prefects while Jimmy walked out with his friends.

"Hi, Professor Potter. I see the finkershins managed to capture you."

Harry smiled as Luna walked up to him. Her wand was tucked behind her ear and she had a fresh radish necklace around her neck. Her earrings looked like tiny strawberries. "Hello Ms. Lovegood. And how was your train ride?"

"Fine, my trunk seems to have gone on holiday though. I hope it comes back in time for classes."

"Is that still going on? I thought with Cho and the older girls gone that would stop."

"They passed their tinklywarts infections on to the younger years."

A scowl crossed Harry's face. "Dobby," he called out.

A small pop and a voice asked, "Master Harry calls Dobby?"

"Hi Dobby. Who is the head-elf at Hogwarts now?"

Dobby rubbed his hands together, "Scour is Head-Elf."

"Can you have Scour join us here?"

Dobby nodded and popped away. An instant later Dobby returned with a fussy looking elf in tow.

"Professor asks for Scour?" The house-elf had an unusual air of authority and seemed rather solemn for an elf, but his eyes lit with excitement at seeing Harry.

"Thank you, Scour. Can you please have the elves collect Ms Lovegood trunk from wherever it has been hidden and return it to her room. Also please keep an eye out if any of her stuff is taken; please have it returned to her."

"Yes, Professor Potter," the elf agreed, but Harry could see some of its excitement wane. "Was there something else, Scour?"

Scour dropped his head and shuffled his feet. "Scour was young elf when Professor had elves clean Chamber. Was hoping we was to do it again. It not been cleaned in many years."

Harry had to smile at that. "I'll tell you what. Do what I told you and you can clean the Chamber tomorrow. And invite Dobby if he wants."

The two elves looked ready to explode. "Thank you, Master Harry!" competed with "Professor Potter is the bestest!" Then the two elves popped away.

Luna smiled dreamily, "That should surprise my House mates. Thank you Harry, but you didn't need to do that."

"You are my friend, Luna. The only one that remembers what we went through. I'd do anything to help you."

"I know Harry. You should have been a Puff with your great-granddaughter." Luna sighed. "I just hope I can do NEWTS this time. It's my third time through and I haven't gotten to take them yet." Luna's face suddenly lit up in a smile. "Professor Flitwick is giving his speech now. Time for me to make my entrance! Bye, Harry!"

Harry sat stunned for a minute as his brain tried to work through what Luna said. Third time through? What in Merlin's name did *that* mean? Before he could form a coherent question, Luna had already made her escape.

"Ms. Lovegood makes my brain hurt too." Harry looked over to see the Sorting Hat still sitting on its stool. "Sorting her was the oddest experience of my thousand years at Hogwarts. Even odder than young Ms. Potter-Evans."

"Give you a rough time, did she?"

"They all do, but Ms. Lovegood was on a whole other plane." The Hat snorted, "Our new Headmaster seems to have forgotten about me. Get an old Hat a ride back?"

Harry picked up the Hat and dropped it on his own head as he walked out of the Great Hall. He could feel the Hat rooting around through his Occlumency shields. Harry mental smacked its' 'hands'.

"Sorry, old habits you know," the Hat muttered. "The Potter clan is always so much fun to sort. None of you fit perfectly into any one House. Did you know that your grandsons often switched places? I wanted to put them both in the same House but they thought it would be more fun to compete with one another."

Harry snorted. That fit Thomas and Albus.

The odd pairing walked through the school heading to the Headmaster's office. They were having an enjoyable conversation about the various pranksters Hogwarts had seen over the years when Harry heard a commotion coming from up ahead.

Harry rounded a corner to find six Second year Ravenclaws trapped in a corner by a small poltergeist throwing dishes at them. Tom told him that the spirit of Tweaky the House-Elf still did not remember anything of its former life.

"PEEVES, YOU WILL STOP THIS AT ONCE!"

The poltergeist turned with a grin and prepared to throw a plate in Harry direction. But then it paused as an odd look crossed its face. "Yes, your Countship!" It dropped the plate and zoomed through a nearby wall.

The Ravenclaws were looking at Harry with stunned expressions. They had never heard of anyone but the Bloody Baron command Peeves successfully before.

"Get back to your common room," Harry told them. "That is enough excitement for the night." As the students moved away, Harry overheard enough to know this story would be all over the school by breakfast. Just what he needed, more attention.

--BD--

## 2 September 1998

Harry's first class was the Third year Gryffindor and Ravenclaw students. The Ravenclaw girls claimed the chairs in the front center of the classroom led by a certain redhead. Harry kept his face solemn as his sister smiled widely at him. Her eyes had the same mischievous sparkle in them their father got when he planned a prank.

Harry stood up and walked around to the front of his desk. He sat down against the edge and smiled at the class. "Good morning, I am Professor Potter. This year your Defense class will be split into two parts, dueling and dark creatures.

"For the dueling portion we will be learning a variety of hexes, curses and their counters. Shield Charms will also be worked on but primarily in your Charms class with Professor Flitwick. We will then combine them and hold a dueling tournament at the end of the year. The top four students from this class will then face the top four from my Slytherin and Hufflepuff class." That led to an excited stir amongst the students.

"For the Dark Creatures portion we will talk about the different creatures, their powers and why they are considered dark. I have secured a visit from a werewolf and am working on a vampire. Some of the creatures we will cover include Dementors, nundu, basilisks, harpies, banshees, and acromantulas. As a class we will develop criteria for judging a creature's 'Dark-factor' and attempt to sort the creatures we discuss by those criteria." Now the stirring was a bit uneasy.

Harry smiled briefly, "Before I go into details, does anyone have any questions so far?"

A Gryffindor raised his hand. "Yes, Mr. ...?"

"Stonehouse, sir. Are you really Sally's older brother?"

Harry expected this would be the first question and so was prepared for it. "Yes, I am one of those Potters. Also, Ms. Potter-Evans who was just sorted into Hufflepuff is a cousin."

A Ravenclaw started, "Professor, how,"

"How can I be fair and impartial to members of my own family?" Harry interrupted. He smiled to show he wasn't offended.

"Yes, professor."

"Actually, I think my brother, Jimmy Potter is more concerned about it going the other way." Some of the class laughed at this. "However, that is a fair concern. So I will make you this offer. If you think my grading is biased, I am willing to allow the Heads of House to review it. Their collective average will then be your grade. Fair enough?"

The students nodded or murmured their agreement.

"Besides, I can use anyone with the last name of Potter as a practice dummy and not have to worry about having parents sending me a Howler," Harry quipped. Sally gave him a mock scowl as the rest of the class laughed.

"Good, now that that is out of the way, open you texts to page 30..."

--BD--

5 September 1998

The broom dived out of the sky from a height of six hundred feet. The form on the broom was a blur as it sped down. At the last second it pulled up, spun around and accelerated against its momentum. The

broom's bristles were a bare foot away from the wall of the house when the broom came to a stop.

"You're insane," an observer said from the porch of the house. "And I thought James was insane. At least I know where you get it."

Harry grinned, "I have been stuck in a castle with a couple of hundred hormonally charged teenagers. They are good kids mostly but Sally and Michele are having way too much fun tracking how many crushes students have on me. The girls are bad enough, but the three male crushes send them into hysterics."

Jonas laughed at his grandfather's comment. "Michele sent me an owl and might have mentioned that."

"Your daughter has already secured her place as the princess of Hufflepuff," Harry commented as he walked onto the porch. "She pulled all the First year Puffs into study sessions and helped a couple students get through bouts of homesickness. Sprout is beaming about how they all came together and credits Michele."

A proud smile crossed Jonas's face. He changed the subject. "Thank you for letting me stay here, Harry."

Harry waved the thanks away. "I'm not here all week. Besides, Potter Manor can get crazy with all the traffic."

The two wizards walked into the house. Once the door was closed, Jonas asked, "Why fly down? You could have used the cabinet to go straight to the 'office'." The Weasley twins started referring to Harry's house under the Fidelius as the office and the name had stuck.

"I wanted to fly anyway," Harry explained. "Besides, this isn't a secret destination. If I came that way I'd have to leave the same way or someone might get suspicious."

Jonas shrugged. "Well, your four apprentices are waiting for you with James, Remus and Sirius. They want to show you their animagus progress."

"I'm looking forward to that," Harry commented. The two wizards walked into Harry's room and into the Vanishing Cabinet.

"Harry, you're here!" Fred called out as they stepped out of the Cabinet. "Oi, George! Come see who just came out of the closet!" Four Stinging Hexes hit was Weasley twin; three from the Marauders and one from Harry.

"Hey! That's not fair!" the hexed redhead protested.

George popped his head into the room. "Does this mean we can start a prank war?"

Before the Marauders or their pranking descendants could say anything, Harry yells, "NO! I need this house standing!" The prankster-wizards all looked at one another silently before Sirius started to chuckle. Soon everyone was laughing and the impending prank war was averted.

"I don't have much time now," Harry said as they settled down. "Show me your progress."

"Let's go into the training room," Thomas suggested. They followed him into the magically expanded room that had once been a young Michael Potter's bedroom.

"Al, why don't you go first," James Potter suggested.

"Okay, Uncle James." The young wizard walked into the middle of the room. He paused for a second as a look of intense concentration crossed his face. A sudden pop of displaced air and a large horse was standing where Albus Potter had been standing a moment ago.

Harry looked on in surprise. "You've managed your transformation already?!"

"We still need to work on the speed of the transformations," Thomas answered. "It takes too much time and effort still."

Harry walked around his transformed grandson. Harry's head only came to the large stallion's shoulder. The horse was pure white but



had the bright green Potter eyes. Harry could see powerful muscles that looked ready to run.

Finishing walking around Al the Horse, Harry looked at the small group of grinning wizards. "So, how many 'hung like a horse' comments has he made so far?"

That brought a chuckle as James commented, "Too many. He's as bad as Padfoot."

"Hey! I am not!"

"Really? Who suggested we throw him a 'bridle' party for him after he finished his transformation the first time?"

"At least we are sure who will be holding the reins in his marriage when he gets hitched," Sirius commented in a thoughtful tone.

Al opened his mouth to respond when Harry interrupted, "One more bad pun and you'll be a gelding." Al looked momentarily shocked as he crossed his legs to the delight of the other wizards.

"Okay, Thomas. Let's see yours," Harry said. "Stop it!" he yelled as the other Potter twin started to loosen his trousers. Thomas looked up with a grin "Show me your animagus form," he said with a sigh in his voice.

Thomas moved to the spot his brother had just vacated with a grin on his face. The grin dropped away as a look of concentration crossed his face. When his human form disappeared, Harry's jaw dropped in shock.

"I didn't think you could have a magical form."

"Theoretically, you're not supposed to have more than one form either, Count," Remus replied pointedly. "But technically, a three-head dog is not a magical animal. The breed may have been magically created but have no magical skills or powers. Myths and popular stories have them as magical because the ancient Greek wizard Hades used his dog, named Cerberus, as a guard on his house. That dog was so famous that most now refer to the entire

breed as Cerberuses. The breed is not as large as popularly believed but they do respond well to *Engorgio* charms and similar potions which may be where the belief came from."

"Thank you, Hermione," Harry commented absently. Remus flushed as the other two Marauders laughed at him.

Thomas the three-headed dog was a bit larger than Sirius's grim-like form but smaller than Harry's wolf. It was all black but again had six bright green eyes. The three dog heads were giving him matching dog grins with tongues hanging out.

'I wonder if Albus had magically enlarged Fluffy during my First year,' Harry wondered. 'It may explain how they got him into that room and back out of the school again.'

"Neither of you are very subtle?" Harry commented aloud. The left of Thomas's three heads started barking at him as the other two started to howl. After a moment of this, Harry said, "Great, you can be your own chorus."

Thomas returned to human form and asked, "Can I have a Scooby snack?"

"What about you two clowns?" Harry asked the Weasley twins.

"We'll do it together-" Fred started

"since we share the same form." George finished.

"What form is that?"

"Pongo abelii"

"What?"

Fred and George walked out onto the training mat and turned to face Harry. With identical grins that changed into their animal form.

"Bloody hell," Harry choked back a laugh. "A pair of orangutans?"

The reddish-orange pair of apes clasped their hands high above their heads with their long arms, pumping them in a sign of victory. Their large grins hadn't changed from their human form.

One of the orangutans waddled its way over to Harry with his arms still raised above his head. Suddenly it reached up and grabbed Harry's head and pulled him down to a loud kiss on the forehead. Harry pulled away sputtering while the two apes wrapped their arms around each other in celebration.

"We found them hanging from the porch roof when we went outside yesterday morning," Remus commented dryly. "They've already mounted bars and climbing ropes in their room."

"It fits their personalities," Harry commented whilst wiping of the orangutans slobber. "Although I think they should have been baboons." The celebrating orangutans stopped to stick their tongues out at Harry.

--BD--

Once the Weasley twins had returned to normal, relatively speaking, the Marauders said their good-byes and left for Potter Manor via Vanishing Cabinet. Harry moved his Unspeakables team down to a small conference room that once was Tia's room.

"Have we turned anything up?"

Al answered, "I stopped in to see Croaker today. He suspects the opposition has gone into hiding until after the election. A lot of the Aurors are pulling heavy overtime providing security for Crouch and McNulty."

"Diagon Alley is getting heavily patrolled," Fred added. "I bought lunch for an Auror that was in school two years ahead of me. He told me the rumor on the Auror force is the Ministry is afraid that someone will act to disrupt the election."

Harry nodded, "Ed Nott has said pretty much the same thing to Tom. The DMLE says it has credible evidence from its informants that the

opposition is moving to influence the election. Has Croaker seen anything?"

"I think he would have said something," Al replied. "We still don't have a lot of domestic informants that might have turned up something."

George looked thoughtful for a second and then said, "We received an order today for a bunch of our charmed defensive products; shield hats, Unsummonable wand holsters and the like. The order came from the Ministry. I'll talk to some of the other merchants on the Alley and see if they got similar orders."

"How much stuff?" Thomas asked.

"Probably enough to outfit half the field Aurors, I'd guess," George answered with a shrug.

"Sounds like someone is going to war," Thomas muttered.

"Who ordered it for the Ministry?" Fred asked his brother.

"It came out of the general Ministry Procurement," was the answer. "Ima Fallguy was the bureaucrat that signed the purchase order. I pretended to have some questions on the order but she would not tell me the name of the person that placed the order. Said I should submit my questions in writing using the proper Ministry forms and they would get back to me."

"In other words, you'll get an answer six months after the delivery is due, if ever," Al commented cynically.

Remember his experiences preparing for the war against Grindelwald, Harry muttered, "Just as bad from the other side."

The meeting continued to the next thirty minutes with nothing really getting accomplished except for scheduling a standing meeting for 22:00 every Wednesday night to discuss anything they discovered. Magical communications mirrors would be used for any emergency contacts.

--BD--

16 September 1998

***The Daily Prophet***

***“Crouch Party wins Largest Bloc in Wizengamot!”***

*By: Jaune Journalisme*

*Bartemius Crouch won the Ministry of Magic in a historic vote that appeared driven by voters’ positive response to his Law and Order message. Our soon-to-be new Minister announced the victory last night in his headquarters on Diagon Alley. Our Minister said, “I appreciate all the trust and support the magical community has placed in me and I assure you I will be tireless in the pursuit of maintaining my campaign promises.”*

*Members of Mr. Crouch’s party won a total of 45 percent of the Wizengamot seats making it all but impossible for another party to claim the Ministership. The Wizengamot will meet tomorrow at noon to seat the new Members of the Wizengamot (MW). The members’ first act will be to vote for a new Minister and will officially elevate the new Minister to his well-deserved office.*

*Mr. McNulty’s campaign was running close in the polls but lost ground in recent days with voters. Mr. McNulty gracefully congratulated the winner and requested that all of wizarding England fully support our new minister.*

*The career highlights on Minister Crouch – pg 3*

*Workings of the magical election process – pg 6*

18 September 1998

***The Daily Prophet***

***“Minister claims Dumbledore Murdered!”***

*By: Jaune Journalisme*

*On his first full day on the job, Minister of Magic Bartemius Crouch shocked the veteran wizarding press corps when he announced the results of a secret Ministry investigation.*

*“Your Ministry has conclusive proof that Professor Albus Dumbledore, the greatest wizard of our age, was murdered through the use of a slow acting poison that damaged his heart leading to his fatal heart attack.”*

*The evidence presented to the press proves a Muggle poison ingested over a nine month period did the deed. The DMLE Investigations Unit has been investigating this shocking crime under heavy secrecy. Minister Crouch decided when briefed that the time for secrecy has ended now that the election is completed. Over a dozen witnesses have been questioned including the three members of the Potter family that were at the beloved Headmaster’s deathbed.*

*Further evidence was presented...*

### ***“Minister Announces Elite Dark Wizard Hunter Corps”***

*By: Venenifer Penn*

*In the same press briefing where he announced the murder of Headmaster Albus Dumbledore, Minister Crouch called for the formation of an elite corps of Dark Wizard Hunters. Numbering only twenty and pulled from the best of the Aurors, Hitwizards, and other specialties, the new unit called Black Watch will root out all the Darkness that is infecting our nation. Their first task will be to bring the murderers of the ‘slayer of Grindelwald’ to justice. In conjunction with that task, the Black Watch will take steps to prevent Darkness from completing the prophecy made last spring at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.*

*Wizengamot gives new Minister full support – pg 3*

*The Life and Times of Albus Dumbledore – pg 4*

*Diagon Alley’s Reaction to the Minister Announcement – pg 7*

*--BD--*

“Professor, what do you think the qualifications will be to join the Black Watch?”

Harry glanced at the student asking the question. This was the Seventh year NEWT class’s first meeting since Minister Crouch’s announcements. The school had been abuzz with shock at the announcement that their previous Headmaster was murdered, and excitement about the new elite force.

“I have not heard anything directly, Ms. Miller, but I suspect, based on the Minister’s comments, that you have advanced skills in a needed area to be offered a position with the Black Watch.” Harry smiled briefly, “I would guess that best start would be to score very well on your defense NEWT.” That garnered a brief chuckle from the class.

“Why is the Black Watch so small, professor?” Jimmy asked.

“Legal reasons I would guess,” Harry answered. “The Black Watch is being formed outside of the DMLE and will report to the Minister directly. The Minister may create these special task forces, but the law prohibits them being greater than twenty people in size.”

“Professor, were you questioned about Professor Dumbledore’s murder?” This came from one of the two Hufflepuffs in the class.

“Yes, the investigators talked to me because I was there when the professor passed away. They wanted to know if I saw anything odd or that could help them in their investigation. It is standard procedure in a situation like this.” Harry paused a moment. “I’ve never been an Auror or Investigator, but if the class is interested I will see if I can get a guest speaker in to talk to you about how the Ministry conducts investigations.”

An enthusiastic approval met this proposal. “Very well, I will look into it. Now, we will continue the lesson we started last week on subduing Vampires in the grip of a feeding frenzy. Who can...”

The class diverted off the topic of Dumbledore’s death and continued the class.

--BD--

26 September 1998

Jimmy stopped in his older brother's office a week later on Saturday afternoon. The Potters had developed rules for their conduct. In the classroom, around other students, or when dealing with school matters, they remained strictly teacher/students. In closed offices, particularly over the weekends, things relaxed.

"I can't believe you gave me a detention!" Jimmy protested as the office door closed.

Harry looked up from his desk with a smirk. "You were the one riding his broom inside the school. And at least it wasn't with Filch or Snape."

A grimace crossed Jimmy's face. "Have you ever done a detention with Flitwick? It's almost worse. He says he's disappointed in you and has you stand in the corner! Feel like an ickle three year-old!"

"I was warned my First year to never get a detention with our Charms professor," Harry commented. "I always got one of the gruesome twosome."

Jimmy snickered as he dropped into a chair opposite Harry. "Hey, I heard something today from Gin about the investigation into Uncle Albus's murder." Seeing he had Harry's attention, Jimmy smiled, "Seems Hermione was the one that figured out what poison was used. The DMLE potions masters couldn't find anything but she convinced them to let her take samples to the Muggle Scotland Yard.

An odd look crossed Jimmy's face. "Why is it called Scotland Yard if it's in London?"

"It was the name of the street in London where their offices were first located," Harry answered absently. "What did the lab turn up?"

Jimmy shrugged, "Gin didn't understand most of what Hermione was talking about- something about mycosopes and deenay analysis."



Harry interpreted this to mean microscopes and DNA analysis revealed the poison. Jimmy might be a halfblood too but he had never encountered much in the way of Muggle technology.

“Any word on any suspects?”

Jimmy shrugged. “Hermione was all excited about the research and stuff. You know how she is. Besides, she would have taken the investigation’s confidentiality seriously.” He snickered a bit. “Hermione and her rules. Did she try the whole PUKE thing in the last timeline?”

“PUKE?”

“People United for a Knowledgeable Experience. It was her attempt at an all-school study group.”

Harry laughed at that. “Nah, we had SPEW. Society to Protect Elvish Welfare.” At Jimmy’s questioning look, Harry explained a bit about Dobby and Hermione’s introduction to house elves.

“Reckon it’s a good thing she met the elves at Potter Manor first this time,” a laughing Jimmy commented. “We had enough fake vomit incidents around the school as it is.”

--BD--

31 October 1998

Halloween fell on a Saturday this year. The students flocked into Hogsmeade to enjoy some time away from the school and enjoy the magical village’s holiday decorations. Just about every student in the school except for the First and Second years were filling the various shops and restaurants.

Tom started assigning staff members to be present in Hogsmeade during the student visits. The Head Boy and Girl, with the assistance of the Prefects, were responsible for making sure the student visitors followed both village and school rules. But the new Headmaster also wanted staff on hand in case of trouble.

It was wandering around Hogsmeade with Filius that Harry ran into the Black Watch for the first time. They wore sharp looking silver robes with black trim. The way the robes flowed around their feet, Harry knew they had an anti-tangling charm on them. Neither of the two wizards approaching them had their hoods up and Harry recognized one of them.

"Auror Shacklebolt, it is nice to see you again," Harry greeted him. In this timeline, they had met at a party Ron Potter threw for his Aurors.

"It is Watchman Shacklebolt now, Professor Potter," the large wizard answered with a small, proud smile.

"So formal, Kingsley? Do I have to call you that too?" Flitwick asked in his happy, chirpy voice.

Kingsley smiled down at the Charms Professor and replied, "You may call me anything you like, professor."

"I told you to call me Filius!" the quarter-goblin protested. "You've been out of my classroom for long enough to get over that formality rubbish."

Harry noted the disapproval on face of Shacklebolt's partner. This wizard was smaller and looked to have a bit of Asian blood. He had cold eyes, Harry noted. They reminded Harry of the eyes he had seen on certain Muggle soldiers or Unspeakables back during the war. They were the ones that liked the fighting too much.

Kingsley followed Harry's gaze. "Professors, allow me to introduce Watchman Rezna. He was one of the most successful Hitwizards in the world before he accepted the invitation to join the Watch."

"It is very nice to meet you, Watchman Rezna," Flitwick offered with a small bow. All he got in reply was a grunt. Flitwick ignored it in his normal cheerful fashion. "So, what brings one of my favorite former students here today?" he asked the former Auror. "Nostalgic for the old days of Hogsmeade weekends?"

Kingsley smiled at the insinuation. "Merely a familiarization tour. The Minister wants the population used to seeing us and knowing we are on the job. There is another patrol being done in Diagon Alley."

"Would you be interested in speaking to some of my students?" Harry offered. "I wanted to get an Auror in to speak to my NEWT classes and I've had a lot of questions about the Black Watch. This would kill two birds with one stone." Harry always liked Kingsley and knew he would interact well with the students.

For his part, Kingsley looked intrigued. "I'll have to clear it with my superiors but that sounds like it would fit perfectly with their public efforts. I always did like teaching at the Academy." The bald wizard smiled. "I will talk to them and owl you next week with some dates."

"Excellent, I won't tell my students until we set a date, but I'm sure they will be excited."

The professors took their leave of the Watchmen. Harry watched them walking away out of the corner of his eye as he and Filius continued on their way.

"Something bothering you, Ja-Harry?"

Harry smirked at his friend's near slip. "I'm not sure. I knew Kingsley before and he is a good man. One of the few things that reassures me about the Black Watch is his inclusion. But it reminds me a bit too much of my time in Germany during the war."

"Surely not!" the charms genius said in shock. "You don't think the Minister would do something like that! Harry only shrugged. "Maybe you are just too sensitive about it," Filius suggested.

"Maybe," Harry admitted. "By law, the Minister must put his task force up for review every forty-two weeks. Stupid number that. If he does it according to the law, then I will feel better about it."

"The Minister did put Senior Undersecretary Cresswell in charge of the Watch. He is a Muggle-born so the Pureblood agenda is right out, and I know Goblins liked him, so he is not a Speciesist," Filius pointed

out. "He is the one putting a human face on the Ministry because Merlin knows Crouch is a cold fish."

"He did put his son, Barty Jr, on the Watch," Harry shot back.

Filius was well aware of Harry's alternate timeline background now. A sly grin crossed Flitwick's face. He looked like a goblin spotting unclaimed gold. "And isn't your daughter-in-law Bellatrix Black Potter? You know, the mother of those two little clones of yours?"

"Oi, that's low," Harry muttered but he couldn't suppress the grin. "And Thomas and Albus are both taller than I am."

"I guess you were the runt of the litter," the diminutive genius sniffed.

"You're evil. I hate debating with you," Harry sighed. "Come on, I'll buy you some of that disgusting coffee you drink whilst I have a civilized tea."

--BD--

15 December 1998

Harry was walking through Hogwarts with Neville when they came across Snape tearing into a pair of Gryffindor Fourth years about damage done to an unused classroom they had just left. He recognized them from his Gryffindor-Slytherin DADA class. Both boys were Muggle-born and Chasers on the House Quidditch team. When Harry arrived, Snape had just taken fifty points from Gryffindor and assigned a week detention when the students returned after the holidays.

"But that's not fair!" the shorter of the two boys protested. "We told you the room was like this when we got here!"

"A likely story," Snape sneered.

Harry motioned for Neville to wait while he walked up to the three. "Is there a problem here?" Harry asked in a mild tone as he walked up.

"Professor Potter, we didn't do it! We found it like this. Honest!"

“Go away, Potter,” Snape seethed. “I am a Head of House, therefore I am your superior. Your opinion is not wanted here.”

“Really,” Harry drawled. He noted that a small crowd was gathering to watch the confrontation. It was a well-reported rumor amongst the students that the two professors did not get along.

“Maybe we can take this into the classroom in question,” Harry suggested. “It is not professional to discuss this in public.”

“There is no discussion, Potter! My punishments stand!” Snape turned and stalked away.

The boys started to protest to Harry their innocence. The watching students broke out in hushed murmurs about what they had seen.

Harry held up a hand for silence. The students all quieted immediately. The students loved his class but they also knew not to disobey him. Even Neville looked a bit intimidated at Harry’s expression.

“Scour,” Harry called.

A pop occurred near the floor. “Professor Potter calls Scour?”

“Thank you, Scour. Do you know who damaged this classroom?”

Scour’s face dropped. “Peeves do it, sir. We’s too slow and not get to it yet.”

Harry smiled, “Its okay. I was just checking. You can go back to work now.”

The elf had just popped away when Harry heard, “Peeves? Do someone say Peeves? Here is Peeves!”

A barrage of pies appeared out of nowhere heading directly for Harry and the two Gryffindors. A negligent wave altered their course towards the watching students. The protests rang out as the pies made impact.

Harry merely smiled and said, "Constant Vigilance." He was pleased to see only a bit of the pie managed to hit Neville through his shields.

Then he turned back to the floating little man. "Peeves, I won't ask if you damaged the classroom." Harry turned to the two boys. "I can't do anything about the detention, but 100 points for being honest and standing up for yourselves." The boys smiled and started to thank Harry.

Peeves decided to interrupt. "Potter, you rotter! You..."

"Peeves!" The poltergeist looked shocked as he stopped his little rant at the professor's command.

Harry grinned, "Come with me Peeves. I need to have a word with you."

The students were even more shocked as they watched the terror of Hogwarts float obediently after their Defense professor into the classroom. Then the door shut ending their observation, although not their speculation Harry was sure.

No one could ever prove that Professor Potter was the instigator behind Peeves sudden focus of pranks on the Potions Master. Snape threatened all kinds of vengeance, but even the Bloody Baron claimed he was powerless to prevent the ghostly imp's rampage. It was noted that the pranks ended on the day after the two Gryffindor boys' final detention.

No one could prove it, but everyone knew. It actually impressed all four Houses. Gryffindor was obvious. Hufflepuff liked the way he stood up for the students even to a more senior professor. Ravenclaw simply wanted to know how he did it. And Slytherin appreciated the way he took revenge that was both public and also couldn't be proved. (They also appreciated that their House was not included in their Head's torments.)

The only three who knew the truth were Harry, Tom, and the being that once was Tweaky the house-elf

--BD--

1 January 1999

The home of Sirius Black, Grimauld Place, bulged with Potters, Prewetts and Weasleys. A number of other guests including the Tonks family and several Hogwarts professors filled in the few empty spaces left in the large townhouse.

James Potter stood up from his place at the dinner table. "Ladies and gentlemen. We are here today having witnessed the most amazing event in the history of the wizarding world. A day many hoped for and feared at the same time."

"Hear, hear!" Remus called out.

James's gin grew larger. "Yet, it came on us anyway. The day the great bachelor of Hogwarts was brought down in his prime! I – OW!"

The Stinging Hex hit James in the back of his head causing him to stop his speech. "He was too far away to smack," Lily muttered to Harry. Her quasi-son smirked back at her.

Rubbing his head, James glared at the pair. "As I was saying, I present to you, Sirius and Mary Black!"

The room cheered as Sirius led his bride into the room. Sirius was impressive in his dress robes but Mary was stunning in her wedding dress. The happy couple paraded into the room to the applause of their guests. Harry thought he had never seen Sirius happier.

Harry didn't know anything about souls, alternate timelines or dimensions. Practically, it didn't matter whose theory of time and destiny was correct. What mattered was here and now, Sirius was getting the life he deserved in any time or dimension. The Sirius of the here and now did not have the weight of losing his best friends or Azkaban on his back.

Sipping a glass of Champaign, a sudden thought made Harry choke on a laugh.

Somehow, if this wasn't the same Sirius Black, Harry was sure the old Snuffles would be floating around here playing voyeur. Harry

hoped it wasn't true. He loved his godfather but the thought of dealing with two of him was more than Harry could handle.

Harry wandered over to where Jimmy and his friends were gathered. The Hogwarts students were joined by Ron and Hermione. Harry snorted as he remembered Mary, his granddaughter, was Ron's cousin.

"Harry!" Jimmy called out with a smile as his brother approached.

"Hello, Harry," Ginny smiled.

"Ginny, you shouldn't address your professor by his first name," Hermione admonished. "I know we met him before he became a professor but it is not right!" Harry laughed. Hermione sounded exactly how he remembered. It brought back a lot of memories.

"It is okay, Hermione. This is a family event," Harry reminded her. "We are cousins of a sort, after all." This seemed to settle the bushy haired witch a bit.

Harry decided to try to divert her. "By the way, congratulations on your work identifying the poison used on Professor Dumbledore." Oddly, Hermione's body language closed up at Harry's compliment.

"I can't talk about that," she muttered whilst turning her head away. Harry seemed to remember her acting like this when she was hiding something. Harry suppressed a grin. Hermione never could lie very well.

"Mione has been real quiet about the investigation," Ron commented around his mouthful of food. "Won't tell me a thing!"

Hermione shook herself and asked, "How are your classes?"

"Brilliant," Ginny answered before Harry could. "He is definitely the best Defense professor we've had yet. We've had Martin Sebastian, the current European Dueling Association champion and a Watchman in to our classes already. I bet everyone in our defense year gets at least an EE on their NEWT."



Hermione looked impressed at Ginny's enthusiasm and started to ask a follow up question when Harry was assaulted from behind.

"Harry!" the tiny witch yelled as she wrapped her arms around his waist. "I missed you!" she giggled.

"It's only been an hour, Michele," Sally remarked dryly as she joined the group.

"I have to store it up for when we go back to school and he starts to act all stuffy again," the First year girl said with an impish grin.

"Hermione was just asking how Harry is in class," Jimmy spoke up.

"He's great!" Michele all but bounced in her excitement.

"Whoa, cut back on the sugar there, Michele," Harry heard Ginny mutter. He grinned over at the redhead and nodded his agreement.

"He is my brother, but I have to agree with the excitable one here. My Third year has already had a werewolf and vampire visit. In the spring we are going a field trip under the lake to see grindylows in their natural environment."

Hermione's face showed she was impressed with what she heard. She turned to Harry with a question on her face.

"I've never been one for theory and books," Harry commented. Seeing a cloud cross her face, Harry held up his hand, "I'm not saying they are bad or wrong, they definitely are an important part of the educational process. But I've found that practical, real-life exposure can drive home the lesson better than a dozen lectures or homework assignments.

Harry shrugged, "If nothing else, the change makes the average student pay better attention to the class."

Hermione nodded grudgingly as she accepted his point. "How did the class respond to Watchman Shackbolt?"

The rest of the group wandered off whilst Hermione continued to ask Harry detailed questions about all aspects of his class. Harry enjoyed getting to spend some time with his former best female friend. Even if she didn't remember him, she still meant a lot to him.

Eventually, Ron came to reclaim his girlfriend and Harry moved off to mingle with the rest of his large extended family.

--BD--

14 February 1999

Harry stepped out of the Vanishing Cabinet at the safe house in Hogsmeade. The owl message from Fred and George called for the urgent meeting tonight. To anyone else reading it, the note sounded like a simple business report. However, certain stray marks on key words gave a very different message.

The two sets of twins were waiting in the conference room. The room seemed a bit tense as Harry entered the it. The four young wizards all greeted Harry as he walked in. Harry was clearly the boss, but all five were also family of some type.

"So, what have you turned up?" Harry asked as he took a seat.

"I had a meeting today with one of my suppliers for potions ingredients," Fred started. "He told me that certain ingredients were suddenly in short supply causing the prices to shoot up like a broom."

"I checked with some of our other suppliers and found it was true for them also," George added. "We looked at the potions list and come up with three known potions that use most of the ingredients. The problem is some of the potions don't use all the ingredients so it is possible a mixture of the three."

"Wolfsbane, Dayglo, and Aristide" Fred supplied.

"I know Wolfsbane," Harry said, "What are the others?"

Thomas answered, "Both of them were developed in the last twenty years. Dayglo is a restorative that restores the body's mental,

emotional, physical and magical balances. It is called Dayglo because it leaves the drinker with what looks like a deep suntan.

“Aristide releases the mind from the body allowing astral projection. The projections are wardable but you have to use a certain ward that is not very common. Obviously a Fidelius is still proof unless the person knows the secret, but otherwise it is a near perfect spying tool.”

Harry winced, “Ouch. Does Croaker know anything about this?”

“He said no,” Al replied. “He seemed upset at the news. Particularly about the Aristide. It is a Ministry-regulated potion and even the formula is classified. Most of the truly sensitive areas of the Ministry are warded against it, but a lot isn’t.”

Harry nodded. He could completely understand that. “Can you get me the ward scheme for that? I want to put it up on my room in the public house, Patter Manor and my Hogwarts office. Also, pick some houses in the village to also ward.

“Does the Phoenix Foundation still give out Wolfsbane potions?”

“I checked with them,” Fred said. “They aren’t stockpiling right now. They do have a six month supply on hand though. Also, now that most of the anti-werewolf laws have been repealed, they charge three galleons a month to help defray the costs.

“Also they told me the werewolf population has actually decreased over the years because of fewer out-of-control wolves biting people. Actually, Remus was one of the last five to be infected by a rogue wolf.”

“You mean people are getting bitten on purpose?” Harry asked incredulously.

Al shrugged, “With the potion so common, a few people that don’t want to go through the work of becoming an Animagus have gone that route.”

Harry was gob struck by this concept. He shook his head to clear it, "Okay, if Wolfsbane is that readily available, I think we should concentrate on the other two options. I'm not sure how Dayglo fits in, but I want to focus on who is gathering up these ingredients and why. We know of three uses, they may have other ones."

--BD--

14 June 1999

The Leaving Feast was in full swing. With exams, OWLS and NEWTS completed, the students felt relieved and were ready to relax. The normal rules were relaxed for the Leaving Feast and students were moving between tables to talk with friends.

The last half of the school year had passed quickly for Harry. Classes went well and the examiners had expressed how impressed they were with the level of performance they saw for both the OWL and NEWT students.

Harry took a bit of a scare when Professor Marchbanks gave Harry a little wink and whispered, "I still remember your NEWT exams too, Mr. Evans." Before Harry could recover, the old witch had laughed and walked away. She never mentioned it again. It still bothered him a week later.

"Have the scollywoinks infested you, Harry?"

Harry grinned at the short, blonde witch that had just drifted over to stand by him. "Just thinking about the past year."

"Hermione was right. NEWTS were a lot of fun, but I don't think the Magical Creatures examiner was much of an expert. He didn't know anything about cryptozoology. He didn't even know about the nargles! He reminded me of Hermione really. She never really believed me either but at least she never made fun of me."

"Maybe, you should write a book, Luna," Harry suggested. "I'd buy a copy."

A pensive look crossed Luna's face. "I'm not sure I'll have time. Maybe the next time." The happy expression returned to her face. "I can't wait to see what happens next. I've never been here before."

Suddenly, Luna gave Harry a hug and kissed him on the lips. Harry was stunned as the Great Hall let out a collective gasp. A lot of the older female (mostly) students had fantasized about doing just that but no one thought Looney Lovegood would be the one to really do it.

Luna leaned back and looked Harry in the eyes. Her gaze was sharp and serious, but he could see the compassion in her eyes. "Be careful. You are the only one that can put it right. Be strong."

Before Harry could utter a word, Luna stepped back and smiled. She looked over her shoulder at the stunned students and said, "The name *is* Lovegood." Then she giggled and skipped out of the hall.

The students and staff watched her go as a glass was slid in front of Harry. "Here, drink this." Tom said.

Harry drank it without taking his eyes from the retreating Luna Lovegood. It was horrible. "What's in it?" he gasped.

"It's my Luna Lovegood relief potion. It'll cut down on the headache caused by any extended conversation with her."

"That was supposed to make me feel better?"

"Well, it made me feel better to have you drink it rather than me," Tom answered with a cheeky grin. "After all, Fred and George gave it to me." Harry looked panicked for a moment before Tom started to laugh.

"Little brat. Knew I should have punished you more."

"You say that a lot," Tom observed. Harry felt his son cast a wandless privacy charm. With the same smiling expression on his face, Tom asked, "What did Ms. Lovegood have to say?"

Harry looked at him and answered, "She said it is about to begin."

--BD--

15 June 1999

Harry sat in his office working his way through a new Defense text written for Fifth year students. The book focused a lot on formal dueling technique rather than actual magical combat, but that was okay for the students now. Impressively, several of the shield spells included in the text were taught as part of the Auror curriculum. It was light years ahead of the text *he* had in his Fifth year.

Deciding to use the book for next year's Fifth year class, Harry placed the text on his bookshelf and looked out the window.

The Hogwarts Express left an hour ago for London. Jimmy, Ginny and the other students finished at Hogwarts took the train as one last nostalgic trip even though all of them could have Apparated straight to their homes. Michele opted to ride the train also. Jonas would meet her at King's Crossing with a Portkey to bring her back to Hogsmeade.

With the students gone, many of the professors had left for the summer holidays as well, so the school was very quiet. Harry decided to wander over to Tom's office to see his harried son. Tom had informed him several times over the school year that the Headmaster had more paperwork to complete than the Minister of Magic.

Harry had just opened his office door when he heard Minerva calling from him on the floo. "Harry! Are you there?!"

Hearing her panicked voice, Harry hurried over. "Minerva, what's wrong?"

"We just got word that the Hogwarts Express is under attack! The conductor got a short message off before he was cut off! The Headmaster just left. I'm leaving too but he told me to call you first."

"I'll see you there," Harry said abruptly.

Grabbing his Firebolt, Harry shot out his office window accelerating and gaining height rapidly. In seconds he reached the outer edge of the Hogwart's wards. He was about to land and Apparate to the

approximate location of the train, but he could see smoke just off in the distance.

Knowing that nothing was in that direction except forest and train track, Harry knew that it had to be the train. Harry made a quick decision and changed his course to make for the train. It would be quicker to land and Apparate, but arriving by broom would allow him to access the tactical situation.

The miles flashed by on the broom. Harry decided on doing one high speed pass before landing. With one hand on the broom and his wand in the other, Harry passed over the train. He could see Tom with the four Heads of House with Sinistra standing near the train's engine. A huge tree lay across the tracks behind them blocking the train's passage.

Harry flew over them towards the rear of the train. What he heard chilled him. It was a howl. The howl of a werewolf.

Passing over the rear of the train, Harry could see six of the furry creatures entering the last car. A stunned Harry Potter brushed off the question of how they transformed in the middle of the day and fired off his first *Reducto* of the battle.

The overpowered spell exploded on the chest of the targeted werewolf, knocking it back from the train with its chest caved in. Harry was landing as he heard more than a dozen Apparation pops behind him. He glanced over in case they were more opponents. He recognized their robes.

The Black Watch had arrived.

The screams coming from inside the train captured Harry's attention. As his second wand dropped into his off-hand, Harry ran into battle.

**A/N: Hopefully, no one got hurt by the cliff at the end there! evil laugh Please send me reviews with constructive criticisms or issues. Let me know what you think I am doing right or wrong in the story!**

## Chapter 8 – Michele

1 September 1998

Michele pulled her grandmother's hand through the crowds in her excitement. She was finally going to get to go to Hogwarts! After a whole week helping Harry at the castle, now she was going to get to go as a student! And there it was, the Hogwarts Express!

"Michele, the train won't leave without you," Andrea Potter-Evans said in an amused, exasperated tone.

"But it's the Express!" Michele answered as if that explained everything. Andrea just rolled her eyes and trailed behind the eleven year-old bundle of energy.

They wound their way through the crowd to reach the train. Andrea paused several times to greet friends or acquaintances from the many Ministry functions. While it was generally held that Tom Potter-Evans was the most effective Minister of Magic in centuries, Andrea's social grace was seen as his greatest political asset. Armed with her Veela charm, a trace of French accent, and a brain to match Tom's, Andrea was a longtime expert in working a room. It was a common joke in the Ministry that they respected Andrea's power more than her husband's, but like many jokes, it had more than an element of truth.

Michele didn't care about that. The little dark-haired witch just wanted the silly people to get out of her way so she could get on the train! Didn't they understand she was on her way to Hogwarts?!

Reaching the train, Michele paused to look at it in wonder. She was finally here!

"Really Michele, one would think you are trying to get rid of us," Andrea teasingly observed.

Michele looked up in shock but caught her grandmother's smile. A sheepish grin crossed her face. "I know I'm being silly, but I've wanted this for so long!"



Andrea bent down and kissed her granddaughter on the cheek. "I know, dear." Andrea leant in closer to Michele's ear. "Just remember, I have my ways of knowing what mischief you get into at school."

Michele looked at her in honest, wide-eyed innocence. "Where would I have ever learnt about being mischievous at school?"

Andrea smirked down at her, "Don't even try that with me young lady. I know you and the rest of the family much to well." This was rewarded by a giggle. "Now, give me a kiss and you can go find a compartment. Jimmy and his friends will be around here sometime soon, I'm sure."

A quick kiss on the cheek and Michele was off. "Bye, Grandma!"

Michele climbed onto the train and almost bounced down the car looking for a compartment. Several of them already held older students but Michele did not see any other Potters. Michele was about halfway down the train when she spotted a near empty compartment with only a young girl inside. The young girl had short, straight red hair and looked like she was crying. Why would anyone be crying on their way to Hogwarts? Michele slid the compartment door open.

"Hi, I'm Michele. Are you okay?"

The girl looked up while wiping her eyes. "I-I'm fine. I just got something in my eye." Michele wasn't stupid but she let it go.

your name?"

"Allison Daniels."

Remembering Grandma's example, Michele said, "It is nice to meet you, Allison." Allison gave her a shy smile.

"You grew up with all this didn't you?" Allison asked in a faintly accusing tone.

"You mean knowing I was a witch? Yep."

"I just found out two months ago." Allison said quietly. "I've never been away from home before and now I am leaving so I can learn to use magic! It's so crazy!" The last was said a bit desperately.

"But think of all the cool things we'll be able to do!" Michele gushed excitedly. "Did you know that some wizards can turn into animals? My grandpa can turn into a mongoose! He is sooo cute like that. Grandma caught him once and put a bow on each ear. I still have the picture!"

The excited witch's enthusiastic babble paused when the door slid open again. A petite, blonde haired girl with a pony tail stood in the opening. "Mind if I join you?" The new girl had a warm, friendly voice that Michele liked immediately.

"Have a seat," Michele cheerfully invited. "I'm Michele and this is my friend Allison Daniels. What's your name?"

"Jamie Doyle. It's nice to meet you."

Michele all but bounced in her seat. "Are you a First year too? Isn't this train really neat?"

Jamie glanced over at Allison who shrugged. The red-head said, "I think she is either really excited for school or has had a lot of sugar."

"But its Hogwarts!" Michele exclaimed with a grin as if that explained it all. When the other two girls snickered, Michele said, "Okay, I'll calm down. I'm just really excited."

"We could guess," Jamie commented in a dry tone but a wide smile.

"Is your family magical too?" Allison asked Jamie.

"My father is a wizard, but my mum is a Muggle archaeologist. Dad was Cursebreaker for Gringotts when he met Mum who was trying to excavate a site above a magical tomb." A bright smile crossed the girl's face. "Dad claims that he kept trying to use Muggle-Repelling wards to make her go away but she was too stubborn to get the hint, so he had to marry her." Jamie's comments brought a round of giggles to the three young witches.

The rest of the train ride was filled with stories of growing up. Jamie talked about growing up around the ancient wizarding sites in Egypt and Mesopotamia. Mrs. Doyle had been hired by a magical research institute to document the historical significance of the finds the Gringotts cursebreakers came across. "Mum says that even if she can never publish in her academic circles, at least someone will know what happened there in the past."

Allison's father was a pilot in the RAF. The fact he flew a "trash hauler" was not nearly as important as the fact he was a Muggle that flew. Both Jamie and Michele had "flown Muggle" a couple of times and were fascinated by the process. Allison told them about all the bases around the world her father had dragged her family to growing up. "Seven years at Hogwarts will be the longest I've lived anywhere by five years," she observed with a grin.

Michele talked about growing up with only her father and his job as a magical diplomat. "But I have a really large extended family. I've got lots of aunts, uncles, cousins, and of course my grandparents. My great-grandfather is even around here somewhere. One of my cousins is a Seventh year Gryffindor and his sister is a Third year Ravenclaw."

Allison looked a bit jealous. "That is so neat that you still get to see your family whilst at school."

"Maybe," Michele allowed with a mischievous smile. "But in the other hand, if I get in trouble my family is sure to hear about it."

"You bet we will." The girls turned to see another girl standing in the compartment doorway wearing her robes with a Ravenclaw crest.

"Hi, Sally!" Michele greeted her cousin excitedly. "This is Allison and Jamie. They're first years too!" Michele turned back to her new friends. "This is my cousin Sally. She is the Third year Ravenclaw."

"Michele, take a deep breath and calm down," Sally advised. "You're liable to spontaneously explode if you keep this up. Remember what happened the last time you got too excited."

The young Veela witch scowled with a disgusted look on her face. "That was not my fault! Harry, that dirty rat, is the one that caused his birthday cake to explode!" The other two girls in the compartment looked at Michele in surprise. "He was the only one not to get hit by the splatter! And it was right in front of him!"

Sally grinned. "Hmm, maybe you're right, but you were the one almost jumping on the table to blow out his candles and he didn't have his wand out."

Michele crossed her arms and pouted cutely. "He still was the one that did it. I'll get him back for blaming me."

"Good luck pranking Harry," Sally smiled. "Remember, he is one of your professors." With that she winked and closed the door with a parting nod to the other two First year girls in the compartment. Michele shot her a parting dirty look but couldn't suppress her own grin.

The compartment was quiet for a moment before Allison quietly asked, "You want to prank one of our professors?"

"No, I want to prank my gr- cousin who happens to be one of our professors," she replied making a distinction. "He's Sally's oldest brother," she added. "Want to help?"

--BD--

The Sorting Hat dropped over Michele's eyes cutting off her view of the Great Hall.

"Another member of the Potter clan I see," The Hat commented dryly. "I love sorting Potters. You're all so challenging."

"We wouldn't want you to get bored," Michele replied.

"Hmm, and here I thought it was just your clan's founder simply over-compensating." Michele felt something 'shift' in her head. "Now, let's see where to place you. A good mind, plenty of bravery but an amazing amount of ambition. Definitely your grandfather's line. My... that is interesting. Ambitious but not without limits. You want to climb

the mountain but take everyone with you. My, my, you are a tough one. So, where do you want to go, Miss Potter-Evans?"

Michele started talking about her views on the different Houses. "But I think I want to do something different."

The Hat snorted. "I think you would do wonderful in Slytherin, but, I think there is only one place for you. And that's in HUFFLEPUFF!"

The Hufflepuff table erupted in applause as their new Headmaster's granddaughter joined their table. Michele happily skipped over to join her friends Jamie and Allison already sitting at the Hufflepuff table. The eleven year-old bundle of energy dropped down into her seat before turning to wave up at the head table. Grandfather and Harry were ginning whilst the rest of the professors looked slightly surprised. Snape's sneer was in full gear.

The rest of the Sorting completed and the meal arrived. Michele was happily chatting with her new Housemates. Jamie and Allison were seated on the other side of the table while a boy names Daniel Tinman sat next to her. A dozen other new Hufflepuffs sat at the table also with the large group introducing each other and exchanging stories. Michele had a wonderful time.

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Michele and the rest of the new 'Puffs followed the two Fifth year Hufflepuff prefects out of the Great Hall. The group went down the main stairs to the Entrance Hall and then down another staircase to enter the dungeon level. Michele recognized the fruit bowl painting Thomas told her hid the kitchens as they walked by it.

A short distance later, the group stopped in front of a still life of a small mountain stream. Robert, the male Prefect, turned to the group. "This is the entrance to our dorm. To open the entrance, simply hold your hand out to the painting like this."

Robert held his hand out to almost touch the painting. A small badger suddenly popped out of the paintings underbrush to sniff at his hand. Then it nodded and dove back into the bushes. Suddenly the painting and the wall around it slid back and rolled to the side, leaving a round

hole wide enough for two students to pass through shoulder to shoulder.

Michele followed her two new friends into the Hufflepuff common room whilst walking along side her other new friend Daniel. A loud applause erupted from the common room as the assembled members of the House welcomed their newest Housemates.

The room was large and spacious with a number of very comfortable looking chairs and couches. Yellow banners hung down over the wall. A number of small fireplaces gave the room a warm glow. Michele noticed a number of small tunnels leading out of the common room with round doors. A number of magical windows, like those at the Ministry, displayed scenic images from around Britain. The room felt cozy without being cramped. Michele loved it.

"I feel like I just stepped into the Hobbit," Michele commented to Jamie.

Bonnie Mac Tavish, the female Prefect leading them, overheard her. "Mr. Tolkien is one of our most famous Hufflepuff alumni. He left Hogwarts in 1910 to attend a Muggle university. He did indeed use our common room and our House's traits in his hobbits. He couldn't tell the Muggles that of course, but there are several articles he wrote stored in the Hogwarts library." Several Muggleborns looked excited about the news whilst most of the Pureblood looked clueless.

"Now," Robert started to draw their attention, "you will each be assigned to a Fourth year student to act as your mentor. Your mentor will assist you in settling into Hogwarts and working on your assignments. The Fourth years have been here long enough to understand how everything works here but won't have the course load of someone working on their OWLS or NEWT-level classes.

"We will begin by calling each of your names to pair you with your mentor. They explain the traditions and life of Hufflepuff. Your mentor will remain with you through your first four years and assist you in mentoring your own First year in your Fourth year at Hogwarts."

Bonnie started reading the names of the First years and then their Fourth year mentor. They went in alphabetical order so Michele

watched Jamie and Allison get called first. Michele was jumping with anticipation when her name was called out. "Michele Potter-Evans, Tammy Bagenstose."

Michele looked over to see a pretty brown haired girl with large brown eyes and a friendly smile making her way over to the younger witch. "Hi, I'm Tammy. Why don't we grab a chair over here and we can get comfortable."

Tammy led her over to some chairs. They dropped into the plush seats. Michele felt it moving under her. Tammy laughed at her expression of surprise.

"They are charmed to adjust to your own preference. Legend has it Helga Hufflepuff herself developed the charm."

"Cool!" Michele exclaimed with a smile.

Tammy introduced herself and told a bit about herself. She was a Muggleborn from Manchester. Her parents were both chemists. "I want to go to university after Hogwarts and get my chemistry degree. Then work on a Potions Mastery at Phoenix. I like to be able to research using Muggle chemistry in potions making. It'll be hard work but I think it would be fun too."

"Now, tell me about yourself. How does it feel to be one on the Potters? Is our new Defense professor part of your family too?"

Michele almost snickered at the dreamy look on Tammy's face. She could wait to tease Harry about the students with crushes on him. Maybe she could keep count. She needed something to get back at him for the birthday cake prank.

--BD--

Michele bounced into her dorm room that she shared with Allison, Jamie and two other girls, Barbara Smith and Artemisia Green. Barbara was a Muggleborn from London and Artemisia was a second generation witch from Wales. In fact, her parents worked at Phoenix as professors in transfiguration and astronomy.

Those pieces of information did not come out until a bit later. Barbara, Allison and Artemisia were upset and feeling more than a bit homesick. Jamie was trying to calm them but their upset was feeding off each other. When Michele entered the room, Jamie looked up with a look of mute appeal on her face.

Ten minutes later the room was filled with laughter as Hurricane Michele landed in the room. It had nothing to do with any Veela power. Those would not appear until puberty set in. Instead, it was simply her irrepressible enthusiasm and self-confidence.

In many ways, Michele's life growing up was the opposite of her adoptive great-grandfather. Where Harry was put down, unloved, and called Freak, Michele was treated as the princess. Not spoilt or undisciplined, but loved and supported by her large family. Of course, no matter how Harry was raised he would never have had the boundless enthusiasm Michele radiated. It seems that only young girls ever receive that 'gift'.

Although classes started the next morning, the young witches sat up late into the night talking and getting to know each other. When the Muggleborn members of the group expressed concerns over learning magic, Michele suggested forming a study group to work on their subjects since all First years have the same classes.

"We can invite the boys to join us and maybe some of the others from other Houses too." Michele suggested enthusiastically.

Artemisia asked, "If we invite people from other Houses, where will we meet? They can't come into our common room."

"We can use a classroom. There's still a lot of them left over from the Grindelwald war that are unused. We can claim one of them." Michele made it sound like the easiest thing in the world. And maybe for her it was.

"Well, first lets see if the 'Puff boys want to join us," Jamie suggested. "Then we can see about expanding to other Houses." The girls agreed and finally went to bed.



They never noticed their Disillusioned Head of House watching from the doorway. Professor Sprout had come by to check on her newest charges. Every year there was some that had trouble transitioning into their new world and Hufflepuff always got a disproportionate share of the Muggleborn at the school. She was one herself.

The excited chatter she had overheard warmed the professor's heart. It seemed like such a good group of girls this year. One of the boys seemed to have some rough edges but she could deal with that.

Making her way back to her office, Professor Sprout thought about the young Ms. Potter-Evans. She had seen many of the Potter Clan come through her classroom. James Potter and Lily Evans had been First years when she started in the school. But Michele was the first to be in her House. A small smile crept across the Herbology professor's face. She was looking forward to seeing the young lady through her seven years. The Potters always were very loyal to their friends and family. It was a trait the Hufflepuff Head of House most admired. What would a Hufflepuff Potter be capable of achieving? It would be most stimulating to find out

--BD--

4 September 1998

Michele quickly ate her breakfast. The other First year Puffs sat with her as a group. She loved her new friends and her House. They were becoming a close-knit group. Only John Adams was a bit on the outside and that was by his own choice. The poor boy's family was Ravenclaw and he was feeling that he had let them down. Michele was confident he would come around eventually.

This morning the Puff's would be joining the Ravenclaws for Potions and then Defense Against the Dark Arts with the Slytherins. She was really looking forward to her class with Professor Potter. She planned on being a very good girl in class, and then delivering her "crush" tally to Harry as class ended.

"Is Professor Potter going to be a good teacher?" Allison asked, breaking Michele out of her thoughts

Michele looked up at the thin redhead. "I think he is going to be brilliant!" she gushed. "I saw some of the things he has planned for us and it should be a really good class."

"But first we have to get through Potions class with Professor Snape," Jamie sighed. "The Second year girls told me he is not a very nice teacher. The rumor is he is only a teacher here because none of the other Potions Masters in England would accept the lower pay to be teaching."

Daniel shrugged. "Then why isn't he working somewhere else too? My brother is a Sixth year Gryffindor. He says Snape hates teaching. Why would he stay here if he can make more gold and not have to teach?"

"If you figure that out, let us know," one of the older boys muttered. "I think everyone has wondered that since the greasy git got here."

Michele pulled everyone's attention back when she announced it was time to start for the Potions classroom. "If we get there early we can all walk in together. Then none of us can be singled out."

The rest of the First year Puffs agreed and started for the dungeons. At Michele's suggestion, they stopped to invite their Ravenclaw classmates to join them. Only one young witch accepted the invitation with the rest too busy reading their texts to want to leave early.

The lone Ravenclaw introduced herself. "My name is Mi Li. My sister Su finished Hogwarts last year."

The Hufflepuffs plus one Ravenclaw made their way to the dungeons in a loud, excited chatter. They arrived at the room a couple minutes early to find the classroom door sealed shut. The boys stood around debating about Quidditch versus football as the best sport in the world. (One boy argued for cricket but the rest properly ignored him.) The girls chatted and asked Mi questions about Ravenclaw.

At exactly 8:00, the door to the potions room was thrown open. Professor Snape appeared in the door. "Get inside, take a seat, and no talking."

The students filed into the dark, odd smelling room. Only about half the Ravenclaws had arrived by that point. Michele took a seat in the middle of the classroom near the center aisle. Allison joined her while Jamie paired up with Mi Li.

Snape stood silently in the front corner of the room waiting for the last of the students to filter in. Exactly three minutes after the door opened, it slammed shut again seemingly on its own.

Snape stepped forward with a condescending sneer on his face. "This is a class that is supposed to teach the exacting, and subtle, craft of potions making. I find it highly doubtful that any of you will achieve the complex understanding needed to reach the true potential of the most powerful of the magical arts.

"For the next five years you will be given the opportunity to prove yourselves. I take only those that received Outstandings on their OWLS in my NEWT-preparation class. The next five years will determine the worthy." The sneer deepened as he looked around the room. "I highly doubt I will see many of you after your Fifth year."

Michele resisted the urge to roll her eyes. Aunt Lily had started showing her basic brewing skills during the summer. Hopefully that would be enough to help her get through the class. She didn't expect to get much out of the potions master.

Professor Snape ignored Michele as he picked on her House mates and a few of the Ravenclaws. Michele reckoned the man did not want to attack his Headmaster's granddaughter, but it didn't keep him from venting on the others in her class. Michele and Allison started working on the basic numbing potion while keeping their heads down.

--BD--

The Slytherins were already seated in the room as the Puffs arrived in the Defense classroom.

The room was bright and airy after the ninety minute session in the dungeon. Professor Potter was lounging casually against his desk and welcomed them with a smile.

"Please come in and take a seat," he invited them. Michele took a seat near the front and smiled innocently at him.

"Good morning, I am Professor Potter. I will be your Defense professor for the next year. Can anyone tell me what we study in this class?" He pointed at a Slytherin boy in the first row. "Yes?"

"Protecting yourself from Dark creatures?"

"Are you asking me or telling me?" Professor Potter asked with a smile.

"Telling, sir."

"Two points for Slytherin for stepping forward. But that answer is not broad enough.

"Defense Against the Dark Arts is about developing your flexibility to deal with malicious or destructive magic. There is no perfect defense that will serve you in all situations. For example, bright light will drive away vampires and gremlins, but will attract Grindells. My goal in this class and for the next several years is to provide you with the skills and judgment to properly assess a situation and respond in the most appropriate manner.

"Dark Magic may take many forms. The three main categories we will deal with are 'Dark' creatures, 'Dark' or cursed objects, and magical spell combat. We will also touch on the so called 'natural' magics, curses and mysticism. Your First year will be a general overview of these subjects. We will also discuss the ethics of improperly using not only what you learn in this class but all of your others as well."

Professor Potter paused for a moment and smiled at the class. "We will also have a bit of fun along the way. I am a great believer in doing rather than simply discussing. Anyone caught napping or daydreaming in the class will be used as a target dummy." He was rewarded by some shy chuckles from the class. Even the Slytherins seemed impressed by their young-looking professor.

"Now to start with..."

--BD--

Class was over and the First years left the room to make their ways back to their dorms before lunch. They left in an excited chatter. Professor Potter had taught them a basic shield for their first day of class. It would protect them from the common 'prank' variety of spells students often used on each other in the halls.

Michele waited until all of the Slytherins and most of the Puff's had left the room before approaching her professor with a single sheet of parchment. Harry was answering a question for one of the boys. Michele waited with a sweet, angelic smile for him to finish.

His question finished, the boy thanked his professor and left. Harry turned to his great-granddaughter. "Homework to hand in already?" he asked in a teasing tone.

"Just a bit of research Sally and I thought you would be interested in, professor." At Harry's raised eyebrow, she put the parchment on the desk.

"As of this morning at breakfast, you are the subject of twelve confirmed crushes spread across all four Houses and hitting every year," Michele told him matter of factly. "That includes a Sixth year and two Seventh year boys." She wrinkled her nose as she looked up at Harry's shocked expression. "Jimmy responded that he had one too but we dropped him off the list."

Harry dropped into his chair as he started to laugh. "Cheeky little brat. Are those for real?" When a grinning Michele nodded her head in the affirmative, Harry sighed. "It happened before when I taught. Although," he turned a mock glare on her, "the last time I didn't have an imp keeping score for me."

Michele smiled smugly at Harry. He pointed a finger at her. "Just remember this when puberty hits, Ms. Veela Princess."

Michele giggled unconcernedly. "Maybe we can have a competition, Professor Potter," she suggested.

“You’ve been around Thomas and Albus too much,” Harry accused. “Now, get to lunch, little brat, before I give you detention.”

Michele smiled impishly before almost skipping out of the room with a small wave. Jamie and Allison were waiting just outside the room and covering their mouths to keep from giggling. They started to laugh as they made their way to the Great Hall.

21 November 1998

Michele woke to a brisk late November Scottish morning with her customary energy. Today was the Hufflepuff-Slytherin Quidditch match. Charlie Weiss, a Seventh year, was the Seeker and Captain for the Hufflepuff squad. Michele was the reserve Seeker.

Charlie had wanted to put Michele in as the starting Seeker because she was a much better natural flyer and Seeker than he was. Michele refused saying it was his final year and he was captain, so he should play. She pointed out she would have six more years to play as the starting Seeker. Eventually, the young witch outsuborned the older wizard,

After a quick shower, Michele threw on her Quidditch gear and started down for breakfast. Her friends dragged themselves out of bed to join her.

The First and Second year Puffs occupied the lower end of their House table as a group. The last couple of months made them a close group and Michele enjoyed the close family atmosphere.

“My father says the Ministry is still getting clues that more Dark wizards are starting to appear.”

The snatch of conversation caught Michele’s attention. “Did something happen?”

Brian, a Second year, shrugged. “My mum thinks the *Prophet* is keeping it quiet for the Ministry. But she says the Aurors and Black Watch are all over Diagon Alley and stuff. Why would they be out if something bad wasn’t happening?”

Melissa Kent, a Third year, whispered, "My Aunt Millicent told me that someone tried to hold a Black Rite on Halloween at Woodhenge but Black Watch chased 'em away. And the local apothecary went missing. The Aurors said he moved, but he left all his things behind."

Michele listened as the conversation continued. The school was filled with rumors and stories about disturbances and disappearances. When asked, both Harry and grandfather told her they were just rumors.

Uncle Ron as the Head Auror kept giving interviews that no cover-up of Dark activity was occurring, but a lot of students thought it was just part of a cover-up by the government. He even came by the school at the Headmaster's request to talk to the students. It cut down on the rumors, but only a bit.

After Trelawney's public prophecy and the news of Professor Dumbledore's murder, it seemed everyone was scared of a new Dark Lord or something happening. Everyone seemed convinced that dark days lay just ahead. An air of pessimism was everywhere.

"Enough of that talk," Michele interrupted the still talking Puffs. "We've got a match to win! Drop the grumpy talk and let's show some House spirit!" Hogwarts didn't have cheerleaders like in Muggle American football, but Michele did a fair job in doing an impromptu 'pep rally' in the Great Hall for her House.

The arrival of her Veela powers with the onset of puberty may have helped with the males of the house, but it was an excited, up group of Puffs that made their way down to the pitch.

The Puffs won the match 180-170 when Michele caught the Snitch while subbing for the injured Charlie Weiss. It was Slytherin's first Quidditch loss to Hufflepuff in five years.

15 February 1999

"Studying hard, Ms. Potter-Evans?"

Michele looked up from her books at her visitor. She had found a secluded corner of the library no one came to but she wasn't too surprised at who found her.

"Hello, Headmaster," she smiled sweetly. "How are you today?"

Tom conjured a chair and sat down next to his granddaughter. "I am doing just fine. And I am here as your grandfather. How are your classes? Ready for your twelfth birthday?"

Michele grinned. "Harry gave me a locket with a picture of him and Grandmum Sarah early. He told me the Potter and Weasley twins are working together on my gift. I just hope the school is still standing when they are done."

Tom looked vaguely concerned. "He didn't mention that to me. Does your father know?"

"I think he is in on it," Michele confirmed. "He was smiling too much the last time I talked to him in my mirror."

Tom smiled, "He never could keep a straight face for a prank. Your grandmother could catch him every time." Noticing the books scattered on the desk, Tom asked, "What are you working on? That doesn't look like a class assignment."

Michele looked a bit sheepish. "I am trying to find some information on my mother."

"What brought this on?"

"Grandmum gave me a book on Veelas now that my Veela powers have started to appear. Most of it was okay, but it doesn't all fit me," Michele explained quietly. Her normally happy, excited voice oddly muted.

"For example, the book says all Veela are blonde haired and blue eyed. I have black hair, brown eyes and a permanent tan. The book says the Veela genes always dominate in girls. I should be able to conjure at least a small fireball by now, but nothing! I reckon it has to be something from my mother's side.



"I just want to know why I am different."

Tom leaned forward and wrapped his arms around his granddaughter. "I understand. I think it is a Potter thing. We tend to break the rules in odd ways. Your Uncle Michael uses it as a verb, to describe some circumstance that has been twisted in some bizarre way. Like Harry going back in time and ending up adopting me. Uncle Michael would say he really Pottered that trip."

Michele snorted as she leant into Tom's shoulder. "I guess I should have expected it after meeting gramps. If half the stories Dad told me are true he must be cursed."

"I think he would agree with you sometimes," Tom laughed. "I suggest you talk to your grandmother about this. I'll set up a family dinner for next weekend." Tom paused. "Have you asked your father about any of this?"

"Daddy never talks about her much. I think it still hurts him," Michele sighed. "I got him to talk about her once before we left India for the last time. She was the assistant to the negotiator for the Sasquatch. Gringotts wanted permission to search their range for one of the Lost Cities of Gold. The Sasquatch won't meet with outsiders until they prove themselves, so they hired human negotiators to do it for them. Dad met mum at a reception and he fell in love at first sight. That's all he would tell me."

"I don't want to bring it up again. He went to his room and came out with a hangover the next day."

"I never heard all that," Tom said after a moment in a quiet voice. "I knew he met her there and tried to find her after she disappeared, but he never gave any details."

The pair sat in silence for a bit. Then Tom cleared his throat and said, "I can understand being curious about where you came from. I was the same way about finding out about my Slytherin heritage. I'll have your grandmum talk to your dad. We'll see what we can find out and go from there. Maybe this summer we can look into it."

Michele jumped up to wrap Tom in a hug. "Thank you, grandpa!"

“What are grandfathers for? Now, I think you might want to get back to your common room. I think they are missing the princess of Hufflepuff,” Tom teased.

With a mock glare, Michele answered, “Unlike you Slytherins that need a leader, we Puffs work together as a group.”

Tom winked. “Okay, pumpkin. Now scoot. They’re waiting for you.”

Michele grinned. “Okay, grandpa. Bye!”

She was halfway to her dorm before she wondered just how her grandfather knew what was happening in her dorm.

15 June 1999

A final party in the Hufflepuff common room followed the Leaving Feast the night before catching the Hogwarts Express for the summer holidays. The Puffs may not have been the smartest in the school. Or the bravest. Or the most cunning. But their House emphasis on teamwork and fair play definitely made them the friendliest, and, generally, the most outgoing of the Houses.

They also threw the best parties in the school. Even professors from other Houses agreed once they saw a Puff party that they beat the ones from their student years.

So it was a very tired group of Hufflepuffs that climbed aboard the Hogwarts Express that morning. The younger years were prevented from having anything stronger than Butterbeer but the late night, loud music, and good food took a toll on them.

The first year Puffs took two compartments on the third car from the back of the train. Michele was joined by Mi Li, Allison, Daniel, and Jamie. The rising Second year Puffs, with one Ravenclaw, dropped into their seats in exhausted clumps.

“Why couldn’t I have just gone home?” Michele wondered aloud. “No, I have to go past my house to take a train to London, so I can floo back to Hogsmeade rather than just go to my nice soft bed.”

"Go to sleep," Jamie moaned. "No noise." This was met with agreeing grumbles from the others. The group was asleep before the train rumbled out of Hogsmeade Station.

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The train suddenly started to shake violently as the brakes screamed in protest. The shaking jolted the sleeping Puffs awake. They looked around with frightened eyes. What was going on? Michele and Jamie wrapped their arms around each other. The two girls across the aisle grabbed onto Daniel's arms. He was just as scared as they were.

The train suddenly slammed to an abrupt stop. Mi, Allison and Daniel were thrown screaming across the compartment into Michele and Jamie as the rapid deceleration threw them forward. The car seemed to rise up as the force of the cars behind it shoved it forward. All five of the students were screaming in terror as they were thrown around the car.

Michele felt her head slam into something behind her.

The next thing she knew, she was lying on the floor of the compartment. Jamie and Allison were both unconscious. Daniel was lying next to her with his eyes open but blankly staring out. Michele noticed his head was tilted at a funny angle. A gasp of shock and grief came out as Michele reached for her friend's hand.

Through her shock, Michele heard another sound. It was the sound of students screaming. It took a moment for her to realize these weren't screams of pain, but pure terror. Loud crashing sounds could be heard mixed in with the screams. Michele couldn't smell smoke so she doubted it was a fire.

'What would Harry do?' she thought. 'I have to get moving.'

Michele drew a shaky breath and pushed herself to her knees. She felt sore but nothing seemed broken. The screams seemed to be getting closer as Michele quickly checked on her friends. The three girls weren't bleeding anywhere and had no obvious broken bones. Michele used her wand to levitate first Mi, and then Jamie back under the benches and out of sight.

She was about to move Allison when she heard the compartment open up behind her. She glanced quickly back over her shoulder. What she saw caused her blood to run cold.

It was a werewolf. And it looked angry.

Michele twirled around to point her wand at the large, gray werewolf standing in the door. The motion caused her to trip over Allison's unconscious form and Daniel's body.

As she fell she shouted out, "*Reducto!*"

Michele could see the surprise in the werewolf's face as the spell leapt out of her wand. Michele's magical core, although strong for a twelve year-old, was not strong enough to for a really powerful spell. However, she was also at point black range. Through a combination of desperation, range, and luck the spell caught the werewolf in the throat. It had enough power to crush the werewolf's wind pipe.

The werewolf dropped to the ground with its claws grasping its throat as it fought to get a breath. Michele lay stunned for a moment before realizing what she had done. Relief for her safety warred with the shock of having killed another creature.

Her relief was short lived as another werewolf appeared in the door before she could struggle to her feet. This one was even bigger. It glanced down at its dead pack mate. Michele could see the rage in its eyes as she raised her wand to defend herself and her friends again.

The werewolf knocked aside her hastily raised wand aside with a casual motion that left her arm numb. The creature seemed to laugh as Michele started to scream. Then it lunged at her.

Incredible pain shot through the small witch's body as the werewolf bit deeply into her shoulder. The wolf wrenched its head, throwing the small witch against the wall of the compartment. Michele squealed in pain as she felt a bone snap as she hit.

Michele slumped against the wall and pulled herself around in a panic. What she saw terrified her.

The werewolf held the slightly moaning Allison by the back of the neck. The small redhead still seemed dazed from the crash. Michele started to whimper in fear for her friend. The creature turned the young girl to face it. Allison opened her eyes to find a werewolf's snarling face staring back at her. The poor witch started to scream as the werewolf drew back its free clawed hand.

Michele screamed for someone to help them along side Allison's shrieks for pure terror.

But no one came.

The claw sliced down, all but eviscerating the small witch. Blood seemed to fill the room in an instant. Allison was silent now in agony as the pain overwhelmed her; the loss of the stomach muscles making it impossible to push air out of her lungs to scream.

The werewolf negligently dropped the dying witch and turned back to Michele.

The last thing she saw was the sight of her own blood dripping from the werewolf's jaws as it approached before the darkness claimed her.

**A/N: Author ducks and hides before mad readers can pelt him with rotten fruit. Would it help if I promise that chapter 9 answers both cliffhangers? Although they really are the same one. ;-)**

**The character of Allison is based on a co-worker of mine. She requested to be stepped on by a giant. I hope getting eviscerated by a werewolf is an acceptable alternative.**

## Chapter 9 – Hogwarts Express

*The miles flashed by on the broom. Harry decided on doing one high-speed pass before landing. With one hand on the broom and his wand in the other, Harry passed over the train. He could see Tom with the four Heads of House with Sinistra standing near the train's engine. A huge tree lay across the tracks behind them blocking the train's passage.*

*Harry flew over them towards the rear of the train. What he heard chilled him. It was a howl. The howl of a werewolf.*

*Passing over the rear of the train, Harry could see six of the furry creatures entering the last car. A stunned Harry Potter brushed off the question of how they transformed in the middle of the day and fired off his first Reducto of the battle.*

*The overpowered spell exploded on the chest of the targeted werewolf, knocking it back from the train with its chest caved in. Harry was landing as he heard more than a dozen Apparition pops behind him. He glanced over in case they were more opponents. He recognized their robes.*

*The Black Watch had arrived.*

*The screams coming from inside the train captured Harry's attention. As his second wand dropped into his off-hand, Harry ran into battle.*

*At the gesture of the largest werewolf, three of the creatures turned back to face Harry. One ran into the train while the leader stood guard on the crumpled door to the car.*

*Harry pointed the wand that originally belonged to Voldemort and growled, "Tarantus!"*

*A bolt of pure electrical energy shot out of the wand accompanied by a tremendous crack of thunder. The bolt forked catching two of the three werewolves in its path. The third flung itself to the side in an amazing display of dexterity. The concussion of the thunder felt like the hammer of the gods had just smacked into the ground. It scattered the three werewolves. All three werewolves were thrown to*

the ground. The smell of charred flesh and ozone filled the air as the two werewolves hit by the lightning stayed on the ground.

Harry turned his attention to the werewolf that was regaining its feet.

*“Everbero.”*

The Bludgeoning Hex fired by the second wand caught the third werewolf in the hip. The creature let out a piteous wail as the bone was pulverized into fragments.

Harry hit all three werewolves with Binding Spells as he ran towards the train. He wanted the three alive to answer questions. The fourth wolf had run into the train when it saw the third wolf fall without getting within twenty feet of Harry. He didn't have the time to deal with these three now. Black Watch could handle them.

Harry slowed as he entered the train. Both wands at the ready, he cautiously entered the car. The rearmost compartment door was halfway open. Inside a group of Ravenclaw Seventh years lay on the floor. No sign of the werewolf. A corner of Harry's brain noted none of the students had been bitten as he moved to the next compartment.

The next three compartments revealed a number of semiconscious and unconscious students. A couple seemed to have sustained serious injury during the crash. Two students seemed to have broken necks from the odd positions their bodies lay in. But there was no sign of the werewolf.

The car clear, Harry prepared to move to the next car. A small gap separated the two cars where they had jumped the track. Harry jumped the gap to the next car.

This car looked a lot rougher than the last car. The car was slightly crumpled and it was held up at an angle so Harry was walking up an incline. The students in the four compartments in this car were mostly Third and Fourth year Hufflepuffs. They seemed to be in better shape than the last car with no deaths but had one student with a compound fracture of her leg.

Harry cast a battlefield healing spell on the girl's leg. It didn't fix the break but simply controlled the bleeding and numbed it until a healer could get to her. The whimpering coming from the girl ceased as the pain went away and she lapsed into unconsciousness.

Finished checking the car, Harry reached the far end of the car to hear the sound of an enraged werewolf coming from the next car. The second car had actually ridden up onto the next one leaving only a smallish opening between the two cars. Harry noticed blood on the sharp, ragged metal edges of the next car.

A sudden pull on Harry's magic caused a cold shot of adrenalin to hit his heart. A feeling of pure rage coursed through him. The last time he felt this angry was when he saw his friends fall in the final battle with Voldemort.

Harry fluttered through the gap in his bat form, transforming on the other side with his wands already drawn. What he saw there chilled him to the bone.

One werewolf lay dead on the floor of the car, but the large leader was halfway into one of the compartments with only its hindquarters visible.

*"Reducto!"*

The curse caught the wolf creature in the ribs, crushing them. But this werewolf was tougher than the others. It quickly backed out of the compartment avoiding Harry's follow-up spell. It seemed to shake off the curse as it regarded Harry.

Now Harry recognized the large grey werewolf. He hadn't seen it in more than a decade. "Greyback," he hissed. He noticed the werewolf that bit Remus Lupin had blood on his jaws.

Harry fired a Freezing Charm at the werewolf's legs. I jumped up to avoid being frozen in place, but that put it directly in the path of the silently cast Sectumsempra. The Slashing Curse invented by Snape caught the wolf on the muzzle. Its head angled down from the jump, the spell entered the top of the muzzle an inch from the eyes and cut



down into the mouth removing the entire nose and jaw of the werewolf.

Greyback dropped to the ground in shock and agony. Normally, Harry would have mercy on any creature but he wasn't going to leave an injured Greyback behind him. A final Reducto ended the alpha werewolf's reign of terror.

After quickly checking that the other werewolf was dead also, Harry stepped into the open compartment door. He almost wished he hadn't.

Two wars had shown Harry some truly brutal images. The visions of torture and mayhem from Voldemort had scarred him at a young age. But nothing prepared him for this.

Harry recognized the group of his First year Puffs. Poor Daniel Tinman looked to have been killed in the crash. But it was the young Ms. Daniels that was truly horrible. The horrible slashes on her stomach along with her pain filled eyes told Harry just how bad it was. A large pool of dark blood told Harry the wounds went deep.

Harry hit her with a Sleeping Charm and watched her body relax into sleep beyond the pain. "*Episkey Primus.*"

The Healing Charm Sarah taught him years ago quickly sealed the wounds and started knitting the destroyed muscles and organs back together. Like many spells the power, intent, and skill of the caster determined its effectiveness. Harry didn't have a lot of skill in healing, but power and intent he had plenty to spare.

Harry sent a quick Messenger Spell to Tom and Katie. As the two Prongs patronus forms sped away, he started to search the compartment. If Ms. Daniels were here then Michele and Ms. Doyle wouldn't be far away.

He found Michele's wand lying on the compartment floor near a small puddle of blood. More blood was smeared on the wall where someone had leant against it. Harry was afraid he knew who's it was.

Harry looked over and spotted Ms. Doyle and Ms. Li pushed back under the bench seats. Their location and the first dead werewolf

gave him a pretty fair clue what had happened before he arrived. A small smile of pride crossed his face.

"Professor Potter? Harry? Are you in here?" a deep voice called out. Harry recognized it.

"In here Kingsley. I think all the werewolves are down," Harry called back.

The large black former Auror appeared in the doorway. "Bloody hell. Did they get any of them?" Harry knew what he was asking.

"I don't think the girl was bitten. It looks like he used his claws on her. Ms. Potter-Evans is missing. She had a charmed locket that acted as a Portkey if she was critically injured. But this was the only compartment they entered unless there were more than the six we saw."

Kingsley frowned. "Another eight were up at the front of the train when the other professors arrived and were waiting for them. None of them boarded the train."

"A distraction then," Harry commented aloud. "Someone knew the professors would Apparate to the front of the train. I only saw the other six because I flew here on my broom."

Further discussion was halted by the arrival of several more Watchmen with a couple of witches in St. Mungos Healer robes. The Healers moved immediately to the unconscious students while the Watchmen stood back a bit.

"This young woman has lost a lot of blood," announced the one crouched next to Ms. Daniels. She pulled out a flask marked as Blood Restorer. "Who cast the healing charm?"

"I did." Harry acknowledged.

"Very nice work. It saved her life. She barely has enough blood left in her to keep her heart going. No bites, so a couple of potions, two, maybe three, days and she'll be fine save a scar or two. Was that

your work on the compound too? Good first response. She could have bled out before we got here.”

“Healer Montgomery, this is Professor Potter, the Hogwarts Defense professor,” Shacklebolt introduced him.

The witch smiled. “One of Katie’s family? I did my Healer training under her. She taught you these spells?”

Harry smiled tiredly. “Something like that.”

A Watchman entered the car and approached the small group. After a quick conference he walked over to where Harry and the others were standing. Kingsley straightened to near attention.

“Report Watchman Shacklebolt,” the newcomer barked.

“Supervisor Crouch, one dead in this car, one werewolf caused injury but no bites. One student is unaccounted for.”

Now Harry recognized the man. He had only seen the real Crouch Jr. for a short time sixteen years before but he matched Harry’s memory.

“That makes twelve dead and thirty-seven serious injuries,” Crouch growled. “All of them were killed or injured in the crash except for this compartment. This is the only one they entered.”

“I think I know why,” Harry commented. It was the only thing that made sense. The two Watchmen turned to look at Harry. “The Headmaster’s granddaughter, Michele Potter-Evans, was also in this compartment. I think she was the target.”

Crouch’s eyes narrowed sharply and he snapped, “Where is she now?”

Harry explained about the Portkey locket. “When activated, it sent her to a safe place in a stasis field. It will keep her stable long enough to get her help.” Noting the Healer looking up at him, Harry added, “I already sent a message to Katie to go to her.” The Healer nodded her satisfaction.

"We'll need to talk to her," Crouch growled.

"I don't know how much she can tell you," Harry shrugged. "From the looks of things, Michele tried to hide her friends under the seats. I checked her wand and she cast two Levitation Charms and a good Reducto for a First year. The smaller werewolf was dead before I got here so she must have gotten a lucky hit."

"We'll still need to talk to her. It's procedure," Kingsley explained.

"I'll tell her father. He can get in touch with you." Harry allowed.

Harry could see dozens of witches and wizards now outside the train. Many of them wore the robes of the Aurors, Black Watch and Healers, but most of them seemed to be civilians. "Probably parents that heard about the attack," he thought. He also noticed a number of students amongst them.

A cat patronus arrived and walked up to Harry. "Dad," Harry heard Katie's voice say, "we found Michele. She is alive but in critical condition. It looks like the werewolf bit her shoulder and shook her around quite a bit. We got the wounds healed and a blood restorer into her. I've kept her unconscious for now. She's too unstable to move right now to St. Mungos so we'll be staying at your house. Lily is helping me and Jonas is on his way back from France."

The patronus faded away as Harry turned to the two Watchmen. "She is alive but in critical condition." Kingsley looked solemn while Crouch Jr. looked blank. "Now, if you will excuse me, I want to talk to the Headmaster about what's happened."

Crouch dismissed him with a wave but Harry had already started for the exit. Crouch Jr. struck him as the same cold fish as his father.

As he exited the train, Harry spotted his son Ron coordinating the Aurors outside the train. Ron waved him over. "Have you heard about Michele?"

Harry nodded. "Katie says she is alive but critical. She and Lily are with her now."

Ron looked relieved at the news. "Jimmy and Sally are fine with their friends. When the train started to break Jimmy cast a cushioning charm on the compartment wall. Pretty quick thinking." Harry nodded his agreement. He felt relieved to hear his brother and friends made it safely.

"Black Watch has claimed the investigation since they were first onsite. Only their people, the Healers and the Investigation Squad are allowed on board. We're just doing crowd control and transporting students to King's Cross Station to meet their parents."

"Did they hand over the three werewolves I caught to you?" Harry asked.

"No, they kept custody of them. They want to question them. You really did a number on them."

"Better than what I did to Greyback."

A stunned expression came to Ron's face and the other Aurors within earshot. "You got Greyback?"

Harry felt a surge of hatred as he nodded. "He won't be biting anyone else ever again," Harry confirmed.

A smile bloomed on Ron's face. "Remus is going to be ecstatic."

Harry saw Tom approaching with Minerva and Filius. He looked angry and repulsed at the same time.

"They kept us delayed when we first showed up. It caught us by surprise," he said in a disgusted voice. "They hid in the tree line and on the train. They seemed to pop out of nowhere."

Minerva's lips were pressed in an angry line. "I still don't understand how they could have morphed in the middle of the day. The full moon is not for another week!" Harry suspected an answer but couldn't say it here.

Tom turned a weary gaze on Harry. "I can't leave here until all of the students are safe. Can you please go check on Michele for me? I

know what Katie's message said, but I want you to go if I can't go myself."

Harry was a bit surprised. "Are you sure? I can stay here while you go."

Tom's expression turned a bit self-mocking. "I'm too important and I'd be missed. I need to reassure the Governors and parents that this won't happen again.

He sighed. "Thank Merlin the restraining and cushioning spells worked as well as they did. The werewolves removed a section of the track before that tree they knocked down. A Muggle train wreck would have been a massive pile of wrecked cars and losses would have been much higher."

"Those charms haven't been updated in years," Filius commented sadly. "The Ministry Magical Transportation Department has used the same charms for over ninety years. Since the Express has never had an accident they never saw a need to come up with more effective charms."

Ron frowned. "It still hasn't had an accident," he said harshly. "This was a deliberate act. Someone went to a lot of trouble to kill innocent children in a very public and messy way. Why would they do such a thing? And target poor Michele? My grandniece wouldn't hurt a fly. She's a Hufflepuff for Merlin's sake!"

Leaving aside the dead werewolf Harry was rather sure Michele had killed, he decided his youngest son had asked some excellent questions.

--BD--

Harry arrived with a slight pop outside his Hogsmeade 'public' house. He quickly made his way into the house and into the Vanishing Cabinet. Once into his old house, he walked down to the basement.

The basement held Sarah's potions lab and a recently built infirmary. That was really too grand a name for two cots, a potions cabinet and

a couple of magical medical diagnostics tools, but that is what everyone called it.

The Portkey lockets were programmed to bring the wearer to this room even if they didn't know the secret of the house. As the Secret Keeper, Harry could create the Portkeys using his knowledge of the secret. The automatic stasis spell limited the risk of an unplanned person using the locket to get into the house.

Katie sat in a chair holding a sleeping Michele's hand whilst Lily and Andrea sat on the cot opposite. All three witches looked up as he entered the room. Harry noticed Michele was laying on the cot with a thin sheet over her and her ruined Hogwarts robe and uniform were in the rubbish bin.

"How is she?"

"Physically, she is healed," Katie answered. "Werewolf bites are magic-resistant but we used Muggle stitches to hold the puncture wounds from the teeth closed. The blood restorers did their job. She'll be a bit sore for a couple days but that's it physically.

"Magically, that is a whole other issue. The bite infected her with lycanthropy but it's not following the normal patterns we see in bite victims. Her temperature is way up. We put cooling charms on the sheets and the bed. Her lips should be blue by now but it's just keeping her stable, a bit over normal. The readings I am getting are completely out of kilter from what we should be seeing at this point. I just don't understand it."

Harry put his hand down on the bed as he kneeled down next to the bed. It felt like he'd just dipped his arm in ice water. He pulled back in shock. Those charms were really set cold.

"What can we do?"

"I have a theory," Lily spoke up. Harry turned to face his mother. "Michele is a Veela. I have been looking in the library here and at Potter Manor and cannot find a single case where a full- or part-blood Veela has been turned into a werewolf. Veela are rare in Britain but

both Veela and werewolves are much more common in Eastern Europe. You'd think it would have happened at least once before.

"Veela are not entirely human. They are the product of human males and mountain nymphs breeding. Even a male, like Jonas, carries some non-human genes even if they are dormant. I think there is something in the Veela chemistry that fights the lycanthrope like a virus."

"It's a good theory," Katie agreed. "I don't know of anything to dispute it."

"I Floo'd a cousin of mine in Bulgaria," Andrea added. "She is a Healer for the colony there. She agreed to look into their literature and contact me once she finds anything."

"Um, I'm almost afraid to ask, but where do pure mountain nymphs come from?" Harry asked.

Andrea grinned at him. "They come from magical oak trees of course." She winked at her former teacher and now father-in-law. "Just think of them as really big bees."

Harry paled. "I really shouldn't have asked," he muttered.

Katie laughed at her father's expression. "The nymphs prefer to stay in their forests, but sometimes like to ... borrow human males for company. A 'pure' Veela is either a first generation cross-breed or has a father that carries Veela genes from both sides of the family."

Harry decided it was best to change the subject before they went into mechanics. "Err, isn't there anything else we can do?" Harry asked.

Katie shrugged as she smiled and accepted Harry's lame attempt to change the subject. "Just be here and work on the symptoms until we get some information. She doesn't feel any discomfort whilst sleeping. The nutrient potions will keep her strength up until we can wake her."

"Why don't you go take a shower and change your robes, Harry," Lily suggested. "You look a wreck and it will help you relax." The other two witches made approving noises to this idea.



Harry fought two Dark Lords and in numerous fights with their minions and dark creatures, but against his quasi-mum, daughter and daughter-in-law, Harry did the smart thing.

He agreed.

--BD--

16 June 1999

Harry woke early the next morning. A glance out the window showed a bright, sunny summer morning in the Scottish Highlands. It seemed wrong after the events of the previous day.

It had been a late night with little to show for it. Tom arrived after seeing that all the students were taken home and safe. The final official tally counted thirteen dead and thirty-eight injuries including Michele. Two of the students were still in critical condition with spinal or neck injuries. The rest had already been treated and released.

Tom blamed himself for not having more security on the train for the students. He was beating on himself when Andrea arrived into the living room where Harry and Tom were sitting. She listened to him for about a minute before speaking her mind.

"Did you have any clue that someone would attack the Express?"

"No, but I..."

"Has there ever been an attack on the Express before?"

"No, but I..."

"Were we currently at war?"

"No" Tom looked a bit resigned now.

"Did you know that they would target our granddaughter?"

Now Tom looked sick. "Of course not!"

Now Andrea wrapped her arms around her husband. "You can't defend everyone all the time. Only someone who is really sick and twisted would think about attacking a train full of school children."

Tom could only nod tiredly as he agreed. He didn't miss the irony that he would have been one of those "sick and twisted" people in the old timeline.

Andrea took Tom home to get some food into him and into bed. Michele was as comfortable as possible and there was nothing more they could do that night. After one last check on Michele and Katie, Harry followed their example.

The next morning, Harry wandered into the kitchen looking for breakfast. There he found a bleary eyed Jonas sitting with a cup of steaming tea. Jonas looked up as Harry walked in.

"Katie told me that locket you gave Michele saved her life," he said without preamble.

Harry dropped into the seat across from Jonas. A cup of tea and a plate of eggs appeared as if by magic in front of Harry but Dobby was gone before he could say a word.

"How is she?"

"I sat with her all night," Jonas said with an empty voice. "Katie says she's stable now. Michele's been the center of my life for the last twelve years." A pair of haunted eyes looked up at Harry. "What would I do if I lost her?"

"Have you slept at all?" Harry asked. Jonas vaguely shook his head no.

"Okay, the first thing we are going to do is take you over to that other house, get you in the shower and then I am giving you a Dreamless Sleep Potion. You're no use to Michele in this condition. When she wakes up she'll need her father, not an Inferius replacement."

Forty minutes later Harry was back in his kitchen seat with a new breakfast plate (Dobby decided the other plate of food was now too

cold for Master Harry Potter.) when a delivery owl appeared with The Daily Prophet. Dobby popped in to take the paper and handed it to Harry.

“Thanks Dobby.”

“Now Master Harry Potter should be eating all of his breakfast. Good Mistress Katie says you do good thing for Master Jonas. She tells Dobby to make sure yous be eating all your breakfast.”

“Yes, Master Dobby. I’ll follow your orders,” Harry said with a straight face. Dobby blushed and popped away.

Chuckling, Harry opened the paper. The chuckling stopped.

**“Werewolves Attack Hogwarts Express!”**

*By: Ima Hooker*

*In an unprecedented incident, werewolves attacked the Hogwarts Express in broad daylight shortly after leaving Hogsmeade Station. Fourteen of the Dark Creatures managed to stop the train and attack the defenceless students. Only the intervention of Minister Crouch’s new Black Watch unit prevented the catastrophe from getting any worse.*

*Twelve students were killed and dozens were injured when the train left the tracks 15 km south of Hogsmeade. The arrival of the Black Watch with assistance from some Hogwarts professors prevented the werewolves from boarding the train en masse. Some persistent rumours claim that at least one student was indeed bitten by one of the Dark Creatures.*

*Minster Crouch toured the attack scene and was visibly moved by the devastation he witnessed there. Passing this reporter, the Minister growled, “The creatures that did this and anyone that supported them will pay to the full extent of the law!”*

*When questioned later about potential changes in Ministry policy, Senior Undersecretary Dirk Cresswell responded, “It was the policy of the previous Ministry to fully integrate these creatures into our society.*

*Now it appears they have taken advantage of our goodwill. I am sure the Minister will be acting in the best interests of the Wizarding World to ensure nothing like this tragedy can ever happen again."*

*Former Minister of Magic and current Hogwarts Headmaster Tom Potter-Evans was unavailable for comment by press time.*

### ***"Black Watch on Guard for Wizarding World"***

*By: Brose Nown*

*The Minister's new Black Watch had already shown its worth in the defence of our children. Acting on a information developed through exhaustive efforts, Black Watch Commander Bartemius Crouch Jr. led his entire twenty wizard unit to rescue the Hogwarts students. The arrival of the highly trained defence unit prevented the werewolves from ravaging our children.*

*In a display of restraint and skill, the Black Watch managed to subdue and capture three of the monsters that would have slain the children. A joint investigation between the Investigations Unit of the DMLE and Black Watch will interrogate the creatures to determine the motive and scope of yesterday's attack.*

*The article went on to describe in glowing terms the advanced training the Black Watch was receiving and the unit's skill and enthusiasm.*

### ***"Wizarding World reacts in shock and anger"***

*By: Gespuis Kogel*

*The mood in Diagon Alley turned ugly yesterday on the news of the Hogwarts Express attack. The average witch and wizard on the street reacted with outrage that someone would be so cold blooded as to attack defenceless children.*

*Archie Boggle of London said, "They've shown their true colours! We should round them all up and force them out of our country!"*

*Melinda Hinton of Round Bottom said, "Thank Merlin for the Minister and Black Watch! Without them even more of our children would have be turned into those monsters!"*

*Kevin Entwhistle of Hogsmeade whose daughter is a Third year in Ravenclaw said, "The people responsible of this act should be given the Kiss immediately! My daughter was on that train and lost a good friend of hers. Skip the trial, just throw them to the Dementors!"*

*For more reactions on the street, see page 15*

*Review of Past Dark Creature Attacks – pg 3*

*Editorial: No More Restraint for Dark Creatures – Wizengamot member Delores Umbridge – pg 5*

Harry was stunned with the slant the Prophet put on the attack. Yes, the Black Watch arrived just after he did himself, but as far as he knew, they never actually cast any combat spells during the entire fight. Certainly, they didn't cast any against the six at the rear of the train. It was the Prophet of course but these stories sounded disturbingly like his Fifth year.

The quotes from the 'common witch and wizard' were probably the most disturbing items. Harry himself was furious about the attack on the train, his students and, particularly, Michele. But Harry's past experience let him focus on the events and not just react. The quotes made it sound like a mob mentality was forming against all werewolves. Cresswell's quote certainly didn't help matters.

Harry decided to go in to talk to Croaker. The Unspeakables may have some additional information on the incident.

--BD--

Before leaving for the Department of Mysteries, Harry stopped in to see Michele. Lily was sitting with her while Andrea and Katie got some much needed sleep.

"Any changes?" Harry asked in a whisper.

"No, she is still being kept asleep. Her fever dropped for a bit but now it's back to where it was. Katie is getting nervous that it's been too high for so long." Lily paused and ran a damp cloth on Michele's forehead.

"Oh, Andrea heard back from her cousin. They are sending us a young Healer that has worked on curses and their effects on Veela physiology for her thesis. She'll be here sometime today via Portkey."

"Did we want to move Michele to St. Mungos today then?" Harry asked. A slightly nervous expression crossed Lily's face. "You want me to bring this Healer here?" Harry sighed. He said it as a question but it was more a resigned statement.

"Katie thinks it's still too dangerous to move her now," Lily explained. "You could blindfold her and bring her here yourself," she suggested in a nervous tone. "I know you need to keep this place secret, but..."

"No," Harry interrupted. "If that is the best thing for Michele, than that's what we'll do. If I have to I'll Oblivate the Healer before she leaves."

A mischievous smile crossed Harry's lips. "Hopefully she'll remember her Healer training when I'm done."

"Harry James Potter!"

--BD--

Harry arrived with a slight crack at the Department of Mysteries secure Apparition Point shortly after noon. After getting Jonas cleaned up and sent to bed with a potion, Harry left to visit Diagon Alley.

Two hours of walking the Alley told him something surprising. The Daily Prophet was understating the reality of the story. The mood in the Alley was simply ugly. The Leaky Cauldron's main room was filled with people discussing the attack. The anger was palpable in the room. There was no debate. It was simply a number of people coming up with harsher and harsher punishment for the creatures responsible.

Voldemort started his terror campaigns with disappearances and rumored attacks. A “Mud-blood Lover” disappearing here, or a Muggle-born’s family attacked there. But nothing concrete. By the time Voldemort’s first public attacks occurred, people were too scared to react with anger. That fear remained when he started his second campaign but even that one started again with shadow attacks and rumors. Voldemort broke the will of the British Wizarding world before he ever stepped from the shadows.

A broken man will often accept abuse out of fear that resistance will attract more punishment where an unbroken man reacts in anger to the blow.

The rumors and fear since the prophecy was made in Hogwart’s Great Hall erupted into anger at this attack on children. The nervous sheep of Harry’s first timeline would have never reacted this way. These people were a mob riot looking for the final spark.

Harry realized the other side would be more than happy to provide that spark. But he had no idea where it would come from. There was no practical way to prevent an attack from an enemy you knew little about; their goals and motives were a complete mystery. And that made Harry really nervous.

The arrival area of the DoM was filled with Unspeakables dashing about. It reminded Harry too much of the time fighting against Grindelwald. Anonymous in his Unspeakable robes, Harry made his way to Croaker’s office.

Harry approached Croakers secretary. “Is Mr. Croaker available?”

The frazzled looking young witch glanced up, “He is due back from the emergency Wizengamot session. You can wait over there.” She pointed to a wall where four other Unspeakables stood waiting. With a muttered thanks, Harry wandered over to the wall.

He’d been waiting silently for five minutes when an angry Croaker arrived. “I’ll be in my office!” he snapped at the young witch. “See to it that I am not disturbed!”

As he turned for his office he recognized the identifying sigil on Harry's cloak. "You! Come with me!"

Harry silently left the small group and followed the enraged Department of Mysteries Department Head into the office, closing the door behind them.

"Those Merlin damned idiots in the Wizengamot are holding ME responsible for not preventing this bloody attack! They completely ignore the fact that we can't operate here by their own law! I couldn't even take credit for you being the one to stop those werewolves! They were too busy giving credit to the bloody Black Watch!"

"And it would break my cover," Harry added mildly.

Croaker glared at Harry for a moment before he relented. "And it would break your cover," he agreed in a resigned voice. Croaker dropped exhaustedly into his office chair and started to rub his eyes.

"Diagon Alley is a cauldron ready to boil over," Harry commented as he took a chair opposite his nominal boss. "Whoever planned this managed to get the wizards to a fever pitch."

"Madam Bones and Ron Potter reported the same thing to the Wizengamot an hour ago," Croaker admitted with a sigh. "The Aurors are trying to keep a lid on things. Hogsmeade is supposed to be even worse than Diagon Alley. A group of drunken idiots tried to storm the Phoenix Foundation's Wolfsbane distribution office there."

"Any idea how they managed to transform in the middle of the day?"

Harry shrugged. "Remember the issue with the potions ingredients? I'm guessing the Wolfsbane was combined with the Dayglo. Something else may have been used also but definitely the Wolfsbane. All the werewolves I faced were in complete control of their actions."

"Great," Croaker grunted. "I think the fear of werewolf attacks anytime or anywhere is part of what is scaring people the most. It was bad enough at night during the full moon, but in the middle of the day?"



This could have been done in Diagon Alley on a Saturday afternoon just as easily.”

“Hmm,” Harry hummed in agreement. “There is another element to this attack though.”

“What’s that?”

“The werewolves that boarded the train passed by several compartments without attacking anyone. They went three cars in to attack one holding six First years, almost all of them Hufflepuffs; the compartment where Michele Potter-Evans just happened to be sitting. I think she was a primary target.”

Croaker looked shocked. “Why? Why her?”

“Devastate Tom and the rest of the family.” Harry suggested. “Or embarrass Hogwarts and the Ministry? ‘You can’t protect the Headmaster’s own granddaughter’ kind of thing’. Or it could have been a personal vendetta.”

Croaker looked a bit disturbed that Harry could even think of those things. “But why so publicly?”

“I don’t know what their goal is,” Harry admitted. “We’ve been looking for over a year and the potions thing was our best lead yet. They seem to be very security conscious and buried deep. None of the usual Pureblood ‘clubs’ have been making any unusual noises. They complained about Crouch making Cresswell, a Muggle-born, Senior Undersecretary but the meetings we infiltrated were just speeches. No actions were taken.

“Remus Lupin didn’t report anything particular in the werewolf community either,” Harry added.

Croaker grimaced. “The DMLE reported Greyback was in Caucus Mountains a month ago according to their brethren in Eastern Europe. We had no positive confirmation he was there, but no one has seen him in England in six months until yesterday.”

“Were the werewolves with him British?” Harry asked.

"Black Watch hasn't released any information yet. Crouch Jr. told the Wizengamot that it was too soon to release information on the investigation. I can understand not telling that pack of magpies, but not telling *me* or the Aurors is pissing me off."

There was really nothing Harry could add to that.

Croaker sat up and looked Harry in the eye. "I am putting the Department under Readiness level 'Mordred'. Your team stays separate but everyone else except Dragon level operations will be pulled into this investigation. I want you to keep running separately. I will have our daily summaries sent to you when your elf brings your reports to me. Hopefully we can get a line on these monsters before they can strike again."

Harry agreed and stood to leave. He was pulling his hood up when Croaker added. "Keep an eye on your family. If these bastards went after your great-granddaughter, they might go after other family members too."

With that cheery thought, Harry left the DoM offices and made his way home via an indirect route.

--BD--

Harry decided to eat lunch in the Three Broomsticks on his way back from meeting with Croaker. He tried to casually chat with some of the neighbors from the village that were there. Many of them grew up in Hogsmeade and Harry either knew their parents from before or remembered much younger versions of them from his time as James Evans. Since moving back to the village, Harry had made an effort to blend back in as a 'newcomer'. Many of the locals welcomed the new Defense professor with open arms.

Unfortunately, casual conversation would not be found today. Croaker was right when he said Hogsmeade was even more outraged than Diagon Alley was. Maybe because it was so close to the attack site or they saw the students every Hogsmeade Weekend, but the villagers saw the attack as a personal attack on them. Harry was peppered with questions about the attack and what he saw.

Several of the villagers had arrived with the relief effort and saw the Black Watch taking away the surviving werewolves. A couple of the villagers started to shout they should have executed the werewolves immediately.

"It's not like we don't know the filthy animals aren't guilty!" Guy Adamson, the local apothecary owner, proclaimed. "Put a silver stake in their leg and let them die slowly is what I say! And if they can attack in broad daylight now, then get rid of the rest of them too!" His listeners cheered the man on. Harry thought that sounded like an Uncle Vernon thing to say, at least if Uncle Vernon ever dealt with a werewolf. Change a couple of words and it sounded like one of Vernon's rants on blacks, Indians, or any other immigrant group he saw as not normal.

"I fought these werewolves. They attacked my students," Harry heard himself saying, "but don't blame all of the werewolves for this attack. Most of them are probably more appalled by it than you are. Lycanthropy is an affliction, not something most of them asked for!"

Harry's comment almost incited a riot as the room erupted in chaos. If any in the inn agreed with Harry's stand, they kept their mouths shut as Harry was verbally attacked from all angles. Deciding discretion was the better part of valor, Harry slipped out of the Three Broomsticks. The volume did not decrease once he was outside as the witches and wizards attempted to outdo each other in their denouncement of the werewolves.

The walk to his house helped to clear Harry's head. He knew tempers were too hot right now and he should have kept his mouth shut but he was never one to shy away from speaking his mind. He had the scars on his hand to prove it too. When not covered by a glamour or Muggle cover-up, 'I must not tell lies' was still visible even after all this time.

Harry walked into his house to find Katie and Tia sitting in the living room quietly talking. Surprised, he said, "I thought you would be at the other place."

Tia smiled, "Michele woke up for about ten minutes. She wanted to be in her own room so we moved her here."

“Really?! How was she?”

“She was a bit vague on what happened,” Katie answered. She still looked worried but some sense of relief was also present. “The first thing she asked was if her friend Allison was okay. We told her you saved her and that the other girls were fine. She smiled and faded out. When Jonas came in and talked to her, she opened her eyes again and asked to be in her room. I thought Jonas was going to take her right then and there. He’s still with her.”

Harry smiled a real smile for the first time that day. “Is she asleep now? Do Tom and Andrea know?”

“Yes to both questions,” Tia smiled. “Tom was already here. Andrea is in with her now with the expert that Andrea’s cousin sent over doing an initial assessment.”

“One we are done with now,” Andrea said as she entered the room. She casually gave Harry a greeting kiss on the cheek and said, “Harry, I think you already know our guest.”

Harry turned to see a familiar face entering the room. “Hello Fleur, I didn’t know they were sending you over.” The young French witch smiled at him. He felt the Veela aura slide past him. Experience and a stubborn sense of self allowed him to ignore it.

“I have just finished my Healer studies,” she answered with her light French accent. “My Veela-heritage and Curse Breaking background are why Madam Orphelia chose me.”

Fleur sat down on the couch next to Andrea. Dobby efficiently popped in with tea and biscuits. Harry thanked him with a wink that caused the elf to flush with pleasure and smile hugely. The Potter women were used to Dobby’s ways and simply smiled. Fleur watched the exchange with some curiosity.

Harry looked back at Fleur and asked, “Why would a Curse Breaking background be important?”

Fleur glanced at Andrea with a question on her face. When Andrea smiled and nodded her permission to the unspoken question, Fleur

explained. "Lycanthropy is not really a disease, even a magical one. It is really an ancient curse. Muggle science will not find a werewolf virus or germ. Even testing a wolf's saliva will not show anything different from a normal wolf. The curse uses ambient magic to effect the change to a person. That is why Muggles can also be changed with no magic of their own. Since the curse only transfers to one in human form, that is why a changed animagus cannot get it."

"Michele is not whole human, so the curse is confused. Her Veela side is fighting the curse. If the Veela side wins, she will not change." A troubled look crossed Fleur's face. "If the wolf wins, she will not survive the first change. Most Veela bitten do not survive the first day after the attack."

Harry felt his heart stop. The stricken expression on his face was matched by Katie and Tia. Andrea had been forewarned but still grabbed Tia's hand.

Harry forced himself to take a breath. "Can we do anything?" he asked in a soft voice.

Fleur smiled gently. "You have done much already for her to have survived this long. I have set up ward stones in her room to hopefully lessen the curse's strength and give her time to fight it." An odd look crossed Fleur's face. "Forgive me if I ask, but what else is she?"

Andrea looked confused, "What do you mean?"

"You are Veela too. You know the genes make us blond and fair skinned. She is the only Veela I have ever heard of that has dark skin and hair. I just assumed that her mother was part-human too. I wanted to know what kind because I am thinking that is what is helping her fight the curse."

"She was human as far as I know," Jonas said from the doorway. "She never mentioned being anything else in the two weeks I knew her. Dad told me Michele suspected she was not a normal Veela because she can't conjure fireballs or was the normal coloring for a Veela." A small smile crossed his lips. "Dad and her planned to look into it this summer. She wanted to know how she was 'Pottered'."

Almost against their will, the Potters in the room chuckled.

The room was silent for a bit before Harry asked, "Do you have a place to stay, Fleur? You are welcome to use one of the bedrooms here or we can set you up in Potter Manor."

"I had planned on getting a room, but thank you. I will stay here so I may watch Michele."

Remembering the scene a short time ago, Harry thought staying at the Leaky Caldron or the Three Broomsticks would have been a huge mistake. Someone treating a potential werewolf would not get a friendly reception.

Harry just hoped things calmed down before the other shoe dropped.

**A/N: See, no cliffhanger! I'll be on vacation for the next week so the next chapter may be a bit delayed. Be patient! It will come! ;-)**



## Chapter 10 – The Fall of the House of Potter

18 June 1999 – Hogsmeade

### 8.00 – Harry's Hideaway

Harry Potter sat back and looked at the wall in his former living room. It was covered with notes, maps and pictures from the investigation into Trelawny's prophecy.

"Have we developed anything on how Greyback got back into the country?"

"Nothing," responded Al. "Everything on the magical side has been locked down by the Black Watch and the Investigations Unit and they're not sharing. Even Uncle Ron can't get anything out of them. Shackbolt admitted they had to swear magically binding oaths not to give any information to anyone outside the units."

"It makes sense," Thomas admitted. "They don't know about us and they don't want any leads leaking out to whoever is behind this. Everyone wants these guys real bad."

Harry frowned as he thought about that. The British Wizarding world continued to rage against the attack on the Hogwarts Express. Rather than calming after a few days, their tempers were rapidly reaching a critical boil.

Conspiracy theories were running rampant. No one believed that the werewolves developed a way to transform during the day on their own. It was one of the few items where Harry agreed with popular opinion. While most blamed a new Dark Lord, some theories, mostly by the old Purebloods, blamed the Muggle government with trying to wipe out the next magical generation. Others said it was an attempt to destabilize the Ministry so a foreign magical Ministry could take power. The named culprits in that theory included the Americans, Australians, and African Ministries. Harry suspected that theory started as a joke that went too far with all of the Ministries starting with the letter 'A' but a lot of wizards and witches were screaming about 'foreign intervention'.



Wizengamot members were giving continual speeches calling for the Dementor's Kiss for the werewolves and anyone that was involved. Harry feared that anyone even suspected of involvement would get the same treatment his Sirius received; straight to Azkaban, no trial included.

Harry looked over at the other twins. "Anything on the Muggle side?"

"The Muggle officials don't have any record we can find of Greyback coming into the country, but he could have taken a small boat across the Channel at any point," Fred answered.

"How did you get that information?" Thomas asked curiously.

George grinned. "Polyjuice. Fred and I picked up a pair of birds that just happened to work for MI-5. A little Sleeping Potions, pluck a hair or two and then we just walked in and asked for it."

"The hardest thing was wearing those bloody heels," Fred admitted with a frown. "How do Muggle women walk in those things?"

Harry ignored the question. He knew if he didn't keep this crew on task this meeting would never finish. "I take it the women remember none of this?"

"Only getting really drunk," Fred answered.

"And spending the night with a pair of handsome, virile twins," George added.

"I didn't know you two were that good with Memory Charms," Al shot back.

Thomas got a curious look on his face. "And how did you two baboons get hairs to pose as Al and I?"

"That's orang-utans, Fluffy!" Fred proclaimed proudly.

Harry broke in before the two sets of cousins could really get started. "Focus, boys." He turned to the Weasley twins. "Any chance the information was fake or incomplete?"

George frowned and glanced at Fred. They talked silently for a minute before George said, "The information came really fast. Either Muggle computers are even faster than we were told or the information was already gathered."

"I think the DMLE or Black Watch already asked for the information," Fred offered. "I slipped the clerk that brought us the information a drop of Veritaserum. He believed the information was genuine."

"It doesn't mean the information is all true," George allowed, "just that if it was faked he still believed it was real."

Harry nodded in thought. One corner of his brain was impressed with how the Weasleys took to the spy game. They treated the whole thing like a giant prank, but after a moment he agreed with their assessment.

"I think the investigators must have found something in the magical records since they locked them down but left the Muggle records open."

"Can Croaker get us the information?" Al asked.

"No," Harry answered. "He ran into the same wall as your Uncle Ron. He's furious about it too. They're claiming the Unspeakables are chartered for Dark Arts Defence research and external defence. Since they are claiming the attacks were internal, the Unspeakables were told to stay out."

Thomas looked thoughtful. "Could they think that someone in the Ministry is involved?"

"Maybe," Harry allowed. "Has Hermione said anything to anyone about the investigation? She is working for them."

"I'll ask Ron and Ginny," George offered.

"They'll talk or we use them as test subjects for WWW," Fred promised.

Harry grinned slightly. "Nothing irreversible. I don't need your mum coming after me."

"Yes, milord Count!" the Weasley twins shouted while dropping to one knee.

Harry smirked at them. "If that is the way you want to be about it... everyone to the training room." Harry's grin grew at the four groans. "We have enough time to get some good training in before you need to leave."

Thomas groaned theatrically. "I thought only Dark Lords tortured their followers."

"I'm not torturing you," Harry corrected. "I'm preparing you." Harry paused a moment before adding in a thoughtful tone, "But Christina will be joining us for Monday's session now that you mention it."

The four younger Unspeakables looked at each other with resignation on their faces.

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### 9.00 – Harry's Public House

"There you are, 'Arry" Fleur said as he entered the kitchen.

"I just got back. Did you need me?"

The French Healer nodded. "Michele is awake and asked for you. We just got Jonas to go to bed a short time ago. Madam Potter and Healer Prewett left a few minutes after he went to sleep." A look of mild curiosity crossed Fleur's face. "Why does she call you Gramps?"

"Excuse me?"

With a small shrug of the shoulders, Fleur smiled. "When Michele first woke she did not realize I was not her grandmother. She asked if "Grandfather and Gramps" were here to see her yet. I told her the Headmaster would be here tonight and asked who Gramps was. She

told me that was her nickname for you. I asked why she would call you this. She told me it was just a family joke.”

Harry poured himself a tea while listening to Fleur. “It’s true. I think Thomas started it,” he casually commented before taking a sip

“Maybe,” Fleur allowed with a bit of mischief in her eyes. “But when she tells me this she has the same look on her face as my family’s kneazle when I caught her playing in my lingerie.”

Fleur timed her comment perfectly as Harry tried to stop from choking on his tea as that mental image passed by. Grabbing a napkin, Harry wiped his mouth and glared at the smirking Veela.

Fleur broke down into giggles. “I am sorry, ‘Arry. That was very wicked of me. Madam Potter and Healer Prewett told me you are immune to Veela charms and it was okay to tease you.”

‘I’ll have to thank Andrea and Katie later,’ Harry promised himself. He waved off Fleur’s apology. “As a member of the Potter Clan you learn to expect it. Is Michele really awake?”

Fleur smiled. “Yes, and she did ask for you and she did look like Sophia, my kneazle, when I asked about your nickname.”

Now, Harry just smiled. “She always looks like that. She is quite a little imp.” Standing up Harry took his tea and headed towards Michele’s room. Before leaving the room, Harry glanced back with a grin and added, “I’ll be sure to tell her you met your part of the agreement.” Fleur’s silvery laughter followed him down the hall.

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Michele was sitting up and reading her Defence textbook when Harry opened the door. “Don’t think kissing up to your professor will save you or anything.”

The young witch looked up with a smile. “Gramps,” she said in a disappointed tone, “I would never use putting on a guilt-trip for giving so much homework to get me out of trouble. Even if I do end up doing

it while recovering from a near death experience.” Harry recognized the look in her eye of someone claiming they were ‘fine’.

Harry sat down on the side of her bed with a smile. “I’m glad you are feeling better.”

Michele smiled at him but Harry could see a glimmer of emotion in her eye. He gently put a hand on her shoulder. “All kidding aside, how are you doing?”

Michele lunged forward suddenly and wrapped her arms around Harry’s neck. “I’m so scared, Gramps. Grandmum and Aunt Katie explained what is happening to me. I don’t want to be a werewolf but I don’t want to die either,” she sobbed into Harry’s shoulder.

“Daniel died in the train but all I can think about is what is going to happen to me at the next full moon. It’s not fair, Gramps! It’s not fair!”

Harry sat with Michele for the next hour as she let her emotions out. He could feel her magic starting to build several times as her emotions peaked but he was able to calm her before her power manifested in any tangible way.

After Michele calmed down, Harry called for Dobby and asked for some butterbeers and treacle tarts. The excitable house-elf provided enough of each for the entire Potter family to share. Michele started to giggle a bit through her tears. It warmed Harry to hear it after the false cheer when he first came in.

Slowly, Michele started to talk to Harry about what happened during the attack from her perspective. Tears formed in the young witch’s eyes as she talked about seeing Daniel’s lifeless body after the crash. Harry held her as she told about hearing the werewolves and trying to hide her friends before they got to her car. Harry was impressed with her quick thinking in a high-pressure situation.

“You reacted much better than many full adult witches and wizards I’ve seen,” Harry assured her. “You did the best you could in a horrible situation. I don’t think anyone below Fifth year could have done better.” Harry paused a moment. “I take that back. No other

student on that train reacted as well as you did, let alone manage to kill one of the werewolves.”

Michele looked up from Harry’s shoulder with a tentative but proud smile on her face. Harry smiled back. “I guess this truly proves you are a Potter; trouble finds you and you have sheer dumb luck on your side.” Michele giggled.

The pair sat quietly for a moment when someone knocked on the door. Then it opened and Thomas stuck his head in. “Hi, imp! Play any pranks this morning?”

Michele smiled at her cousin. “None yet. Gramps and Auntie Katie won’t let me out of bed yet.”

“Hmmm, don’t worry,” Thomas said in a conspiratorial tone, “we’ll get you a distraction.” Michele smiled as Thomas looked up at Harry. “Seriously, I think you need to come out here for a bit.”

Harry saw the look of importance in his grandson’s eyes. For Michele’s benefit, he said, “I think this is part of your plan, but I’ll come right now.”

Harry stood up and gave Michele a kiss on the cheek before walking out of the room. Thomas stayed just long enough to give her a mischievous wink before following Harry out.

Once out of the room, Harry asked, “What’s up?”

“It just came in on the Wireless,” Thomas said as he led the way into the Living Room. Albus was there with Fleur, Katie and Jonas. Al looked angry whilst the others looked shocked and horrified. Harry could hear Crouch Senior’s voice over the Wireless.

“What happened?” Harry asked.

“Five attacks last night,” Al snarled in answer. “Sounds like two werewolf attacks on Muggle villages with no known survivors except maybe some of the missing teenagers and children. And odds are that even if they are alive, they’ve be bitten by now. Vampires attacked the Hopewell Family killing the entire line. The last two seem

to have been Dark Wizards using some kind of Obscuration Charm to hide their features. They raided St. Mungos and killed a number of patients and staff. So far they are reporting six dead and thirty-four wounded. The last attack was on a number of flats off a small alley near Diagon Alley called Morgana Mews. They killed all twenty-three people there. Most of them were weaker wizards and squibs that worked in the shops on Diagon and Knockturn Alleys."

Harry felt shocked "Were any of them caught or identified?"

"According to Crouch, the Aurors were sent to the wrong destination to respond to the Morgana Mews attack. By the time they got to the right location, it was too late to do more than clean up. The vampires were gone before the Aurors could respond to their ward alarms. The onsite Aurors at St. Mungos managed to fight off their attackers but didn't manage to capture anyone."

"Black Watch killed three werewolves and captured another," Thomas added. "That was the only positive note in Crouch's whole report."

The room fell silent as they listened to the rest of Crouch's speech. Now he was promising the criminals would be captured and brought to justice for their crimes against Wizarding-kind. Crouch wasn't an emotional speaker but his anger and determination to stop the attacks was evident in his voice. Harry had to concede that the Minister seemed genuine in his reaction. It was a hell of a lot better than Fudge ever managed against Voldemort.

When Crouch finished, Harry turned to Al and Thomas. "Where are Fred and George?"

"They went to their shop after we finished our workout," Thomas replied. He managed not to glance at the witches in the room when he answered.

Harry nodded. "Thomas, get changed and go into the office to check on things. Al, you're with me." The twins nodded their understanding.

"Where are you going?" Fleur asked.

"Harry and the twins work for the Phoenix Foundation," Katie said for her father. "Harry oversees operations for my brother Michael. The Trouble Twins here are his assistants."

"Aunt Katie!" Al protested, "How can you say that about your favourite nephews?"

"Oi, I resent that," Jonas yelled in mock indignation. "I'm her favourite!"

Katie grinned and winked at her father. "Sorry, but I think Harry is my favourite 'nephew'."

"Hey!" her three real nephews protested.

Harry gave them a smug grin. "There you have it. Now get going you two."

"How can you people make jokes after what has happened?" Fleur asked in shock. "All those people and you still make jokes!"

Andrea heard this as she stepped out of the Floo. "It's their way of dealing with the pressure, dear. I think all the Potters are a bit mad though." She grinned at the indignant looks from the other Potters in the room. "If you think they are bad, you should hear the stories my husband tells about his father and your grandfather."

Harry almost laughed at the look of distaste that crossed the beautiful French Healer's face. It was the same expression he remembered from the start of the Tri-Wizard Tournament and Fleur's reaction to all things English. Harry briefly wondered about the changes caused by Fleur never meeting Bill in this timeline. This Fleur never moved to England to study English and Bill Weasley. She also never saw the battles as a member of the Order of the Phoenix that the old Fleur saw. In the old timeline, Fleur would have died six months from now in a field outside Hogwarts after killing six Death Eaters while defending Bill's body.

Harry shook that off before he started going too far down that road. He had dealt with the pain of losing his friends to Voldemort long ago,



but seeing their doubles alive and happy sometimes brought it back to a degree.

"We have to get going, 'Aunt' Katie," Harry said with a cheeky smile. "I'm sure you can tell Ms. Delacour all kinds of stories after we're gone."

"Get out of here, you three," Andrea shooed them off. "I want to see my granddaughter and you're slowing me down."

Harry and the twins said goodbye and made a show of leaving the house. They quickly Apparated to the Fidelius protected house to change into their Unspeakable robes. They soon left for on their individual tasks.

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#### 10.45 – Diagon Alley

Harry and Al arrived in Diagon Alley's Apparition Point and started making their way down towards Morgana Mews. Their Unspeakable robes rendered them unidentifiable except for general impressions of height and a bit of weight.

The Alley was moderately busy for the first week after the Hogwarts summer holidays started. Harry noted a number of Auror patrols walking about in pairs. The shoppers seemed nervous and on edge watching the Unspeakables passing by. It reminded Harry too much of the time just after his Fifth year ended.

The entrance to Morgana Mews was blocked off by a squad of Black Watchmen. Harry didn't recognize any of the wizards so he approached the one with the senior rank markings.

"Hello, who is in charge of the investigation here?"

The large wizard in the Black Watch uniform must have had a lot of Norse blood in his veins. He towered over Harry by a foot at six and a half feet tall and was huge across the shoulders. He had long blonde hair pulled into a ponytail with piercing blue eyes. Harry wondered when the Wagner music would start playing.

"What do you want, little man?" the blonde Viking asked in a condescending tone.

Harry noted the rank tab on the man's sleeve. "Common courtesy would be nice, squad leader," Harry answered dryly.

The Viking tried to step up so close to Harry that the much shorter Harry would have to crane his neck back to see the Watchman's face. "Think you are funny, little man?"

Harry refused to play his game and deftly stepped around the wizard. The larger wizard turned to find Harry's wand pointed at his waist. He also noticed its tip was glowing.

"Since I can't reach that thick skull of yours, maybe this will get your attention a bit more," Harry asked in a sneer Snape would have been proud of.

A grin crossed the Viking's face. "This ickle Unspeakable has a pair of brass ones!" he roared. "Not weak blooded like all you other puny Englishman!" He reached out to lightly punch Harry in the shoulder. "I like you, Unspeakable. What is your name?"

"You can call me Bob."

The giant wizard thumped his chest with one meaty fist. "I am Eric Thorenson!" he boomed at in a loud voice. Then he leant over and in a normal voice he said, "Investigator Fenton is in charge on the Mews case. He should be in the third building on the right, sir."

Harry smiled in his hood. "It's all an act isn't it?"

Thorenson smiled, "People expect it with the size. Plus it helps intimidate any reporters trying to sneak by."

"Just look out for bugs," Harry said with a chuckle. "Come, Mr. Blue. We have work to do."

Al followed behind Harry towards the indicated building. "That was a bit *hairy*, Bob"

Harry smirked at his grandson, but then his expression sobered. "Once we get to the scene of the attack, I want you to start using the diagnostic spells to identify any Dark or Offensive magic used in the area. Knowing their spells of choice might help us narrow down the field."

"Doesn't the DMLE have the same diagnostic spell?"

"Not this variant. Theirs is a bit weaker and only identifies the more common spells. The really Dark stuff is left up to our Department."

The two Unspeakables walked up one flight of stairs to find a flat with its door thrown wide open. Three DMLE employees were shrinking the four bodies in the room and placing them in small boxes for transport to St. Mungos. Harry recognized Investigator Fenton from his interview several months ago.

Fenton turned to face the two Unspeakables when he noticed them walk into the room. "May I help you, gentlemen?" he asked in a flat voice.

Harry held up a hands to express they meant no offense. "We wanted to check the scene for signs of Dark magic that would fall under our department. We are not here to push into your investigation, but I am as angry over these attacks as anyone else. Is there anything we can do to help?"

Fenton glared at Harry suspiciously for a moment before saying, "There is no sign of any of the Darker magics. Almost all of the victims were killed with Cutting or Bludgeoning Curses. Only these four were killed with the Killing Curse. No other Unforgivables were used. We found traces of a Silencing Spell cast over the entire alley. Our department Healer estimates all of the victims were killed within eight minutes from first to last.

"I guess there were at least six and possibly up to nine of the attackers. We can't pick up any usable trace of magical signature."

Harry nodded in understanding. He had seen the Dark Army use similar hit and run tactics during the war. It was never a pretty sight. "Any eyewitnesses?" he asked.

"None here," Fenton grunted. "The Aurors at St. Mungos described them as average size with black cloaks with no distinguishing features. The inside of their hoods had an Obscuration Charm similar to the one you blokes use. In other words, nothing of any bloody use!" The investigator's final words betrayed his frustration with the lack of information.

"Sir?" Al said as he stepped next to Harry.

"Yes?"

"I ran the diagnostics as you requested. It came back the same as the Inspector told you, except for one anomaly."

Fenton looked up in surprise. "What's this?"

"It was the flat next door, sir. A pain curse of Slavic or Russian origin was used. It is on the Department's proscribed list of foreign Dark magics."

"What does that mean?" Fenton asked.

"It means at least one of your attackers was either foreign or spent time studying abroad," Harry answered.

"They took their time in there too," Al added. "I think whoever used those spells stayed there and didn't take part in the rest of the attack."

"You can tell that?" the Inspector asked in surprise.

Harry ignored the question by asking one of his own. "Who lived in that flat? Could they have been a target whilst the rest was a cover up?"

Fenton pulled a small scroll out of his pocket and opened it. He glanced down and read, "Jon Alberts, 21, a Squib from Manchester area. Family is fairly old Pureblood; not too wealthy but well known for several magical artists over the last two hundred years. They didn't disown him and found him a job in Diagon Alley as a clerk at Arty Art's Art Bazaar." Fenton paused a moment. "His father is the official portrait artist for the Wizengamot."

Fenton looked up as he put the scroll away. "That is all we have found so far."

"Seems almost random," Al commented quietly.

"Maybe," Harry replied in the same tone. In a normal voice, Harry said, "Investigator, we will look into the foreign Dark magics that were used and provide you with our initial analysis within a day."

Fenton smiled, "I would appreciate that. Please keep me informed."

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### 17.30 Harry's Public House

A tired and frustrated Harry Potter returned to his house in Hogsmeade that evening.

The Department of Mysteries had turned up nothing of any real importance. The Dark magic spells detected in the flat were a dead end. Although not used in England often, they were common in Dark Wizarding circles in the eastern parts of Europe. With nothing more to go on, they couldn't narrow down to a workable list of suspects, even with just the wizards and witches the Ministry knew studied abroad. A discrete look into the life of Jon Alberts was equally fruitless. The man's family was stunned and unable to provide any motivation for why he might have been singled out.

"You look as bad as I feel," Jonas commented as Harry walked into the kitchen.

"It's been one of those days," Harry agreed. "How is Michele?"

"Sleeping," her father replied. "I sat with her all day. She had a couple periods of chills and fevers but mostly she feels okay."

Harry poured himself a cup of tea. He sat down across from his grandson. "James and Lily are having a family dinner tonight at 18.30. Your parents and most of your aunts and uncles are going to be there. Why don't you go in my place?" Jonas started to protest, but Harry waved him down.

"I'll sit with Michele," Harry said with a tired smile. "I need to sit and think about what happened today and a party, especially one where the all three Marauders plus the Prewett twins attending, is the last thing I need right now." Harry's smile grew into a grin. "Rumour has it Jimmy and Ginny are going to announce their engagement."

"Rumour, huh," Jonas commented with an answering grin.

"Well," Harry said adopting aristocratic tones, "The Misters Weasley might have been testing out a new product and *accidentally* overheard the proposal."

Jonas snickered at the mental image. "It sounds like fun, but I should be here with Michele."

"Go, Jonas. Michele will be fine. Fleur's still here and I will look after her too. You need to get out for a bit."

Jonas sighed. "Okay, Harry. You win. I'll get cleaned up and go. Just one question."

"What's that?"

A sly grin crossed Jonas's face. "When you said you would take care of 'her' did you mean Michele or Fleur? Dare I leave you two young kids here alone?" He laughed as Harry's face reddened.

"Get out of here!" Harry yelled in mock anger whilst warring with being amused and embarrassed at the same time. "Get your mind out of the gutter!"

Jonas beat a laughing retreat to get cleaned up when Harry heard a voice behind him. "Hmm, too bad. We could have had fun. Pity."

Harry whirled to see a giggling Fleur leaving the kitchen. Harry turned red again and wondered how much she really heard.

--BD--

Ministry of Magic 18.30

The reception hall was filled with a number of reporters and ministry workers from the International Cooperation and Sports and Games Departments. Rumour said the Minister was going to announce a new Quidditch tournament for the teams of the various European ministries for the title of European Quidditch Champion. It would be timed to occur every four years directly in between the Quidditch World Cup games. The room was filled with excitement waiting for the Minister's address.

Minister Crouch stepped up to the podium as a hush settled on the crowd. The Minister wasn't loved like Minister Potter-Evans had been, but they did greatly respect the wizard.

"Good evening, I am here to announce the formation of the European Quidditch Championships, in conjunction with my counterparts in the various Ministries of Europe." The crowd burst into applause so loud the Minister paused for a moment. "Starting next summer, a series of games will be held in the host nation every four years. The first Championship will be here in England."

Now the roar was deafening as 'Quidditch crazies' started to chant for England. A small frown crossed the Minister's face as he waited for them to quiet down.

The crowd was starting to settle when a man jumped onto the stage. In a single motion, he ripped off the cloak, yelling, "FOR THE PACK!" Then he leapt at the shocked Minister. Like the Minister, the Aurors standing guard were stunned into immobility.

By the time he landed on the surprised wizard, it was no longer a man, but a large grey werewolf. The wolf had the Minister by the throat before anyone could even blink. The werewolf smashed into the Minister, knocking them both to the floor.

Auror Charles McGunn was the first to shake off his shock. A well cast Blasting Curse hit the werewolf on the left hip smashing the bones into tiny pieces. His action woke the other Aurors and soon a number of spells impacted on the werewolf.

The wolf was thrown off the Minister. Its teeth made a brutal mess of the Minister's throat. The werewolf struggled to get to its feet when an

Auror cast a final Reducto into the creature's throat almost decapitating it.

Chaos filled the room as panic spread through the crowd as they realized what they had just witnessed. Wails of fear and terrified babbling started to fill the room.

"GET OUT OF MY WAY!" a commanding voice boomed.

The panicked crowd parted to allow Barty Crouch Jr. in his Black Watch garb and three other members of the Watch to run to the stage. Crouch Jr. dropped at his father's side and started casting healing spells at his neck. The other Watchmen pushed the Aurors dismissively out of the way to cover the dying werewolf.

Crouch Jr. seemed to realize his efforts were hopeless. Minister Crouch just stared up at his son as his eyes started to glaze over.

"Goodbye, father," Crouch Jr. sighed. He reached up and gently closed his father the Minister's eyes.

The crowd fell silent as they watched the man cradling his father's body. No one could see his expression as he sat slumped over the Minister, but his shoulders were quaking as he grieved.

The werewolf stopped moving and started to change back into human form. A Watchman rolled the body over to expose the killer. Gasps rang out as flashes from reporters' cameras started to capture the scene. The Watchman told the Aurors to push the crowd back as he conjured a black sheet to cover the body.

Then the crowd's attention was pulled back to the stage as the Black Watch commander wiped his face and straightened up. He gently set his father back down on the stage. He stood up and those nearest the stage could see his robes were stained with his father's blood and tear tracks ran down his cheeks.

"Send for Minister Cresswell," he told one of his men. As the wizard turned and ran from the room, Crouch turned to another of his men. "Send for the Investigative Squad. I want the one responsible for this



atrocities and all the other attacks given the Kiss within twenty-four hours or by Merlin I will know why!"

Many of the observers shivered at the cold menace in the man's voice; even the ones that completely agreed with him.

--BD--

### Department of Mysteries 18.50

Croaker had just arrived in his office after the emergency recall following Minister Crouch's assassination. He had been visiting his daughter's family and it had taken awhile for his office to locate him via Floo.

"Department Head Croaker?"

Croaker looked up as a Black Watch patrol stormed into his office, where no one not a member of the Department of Mysteries should be. Croaker put that aside for now.

"Was there another attack?" he asked instead.

The Watchman ignored him. "Mr. Croaker, you are under arrest for conspiracy with the former Unspeakable known as the Count and now pretending to be Harry James Potter." The six Watchmen all had their wands pointed at Croaker as their leader spoke.

Croaker was shocked. "You're insane! My oath of office prevents me from siding against the Ministry!" Then he heard some screams coming from outside his office and the sounds of spellfire.

Croaker realized it was a trap. The old Unspeakable was one of the best fighters the department produced. He flung himself to the side as he pulled his wand. A silent Cutting Curse was fired off at the leader before the senior Unspeakable hit the ground. A corner of his mind was amazed that such a large man could move so quickly.

The Curse continued past the patrol leader to hit the Watchman behind him. It cut the Femoral Artery of Watchman whilst leaving a deep slash in the man's leg. The wizard dropped as blood started to

soak his robe. Unfortunately, Croaker would not get another spell off as three Killing Curses smacked into his body simultaneously.

“Get Thompson up to the infirmary then get Croaker’s body up to the Watch offices,” Patrol Leader Thorenson snarled. “And find out what fool started killing the Unspeakables before we could get this piece of shit in a secure cell!”

The four remaining Watchmen scurried off to follow out the commands of the large latter-day Viking that led them.

--BD--

### Hogwarts 18.50

Tom was late as he hurried to get things done before heading over to Potter Mansion for a family dinner. He always believed the Ministry generated more paperwork than anyplace else until he took Albus’s old job. The Headmaster had no real staff to handle much of the details so almost every decision fell to him.

“No wonder the old Albus never checked on you,” he commented once to Harry. “He was lost in a sea of parchment and couldn’t find the surface!”

Summer was actually the busiest time for the Headmaster. Planning for the next school year with budgets, staffing, buying supplies and potions ingredients. Add in meeting with Muggleborns’ parents and the occasional nervous mother, and it made a more than fulltime job.

The last purchase order signed (for now), Tom stood and started to clean up a bit before Flooing to his nephew’s house. Tom was walking over to the Floo when it turned green and a head appeared in the flames.

“Headmaster, may we come through?”

Tom smiled at a favourite former student. “Of course.” A moment later, Hermione Granger and Kingsley Shacklebolt were standing in his office.

"How may I help you?" Tom asked as he gestured to some chairs.

"No thank you, sir," Hermione declined in a stiff manner. Tom hid a smile because the young witch's manner mimicked her role model, Professor McGonagall. "We need you to come down to the Ministry to help us with an urgent investigation. Minister Crouch was assassinated a short time ago and we need your assistance."

Tom's jaw dropped in surprise. "How? When?"

"A werewolf, sir, during a press conference," Kingsley explained. "It wasn't pretty." Kingsley and Hermione shared a glance. Then the former Auror added, "It was Remus Lupin."

"Remus?!"

"Sir, we know that Lupin was a friend of the Potter family," Hermione said in a respectful but insistent voice. "We need your help to figure out why he would do something like this."

Tom nodded. "I understand. Let's go," he said walking over to the Floo. "I'll contact my wife from the Ministry to let her know I'll be missing dinner."

The three stepped into the fire calling out for the DMLE offices.

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### Potter Manor 19.05

Jonas sat back and laughed with the rest of the family as James poked fun at his youngest son for his newly announced engagement. It was a good turnout tonight. James, Lily, Sally, Jimmy plus the future Mrs. Potter represented the 'senior' line of the Potter family. From the rest of the clan it included Katie and Tia with their husbands, Michael, Ron and Bella, Andrea Potter-Evans and himself. Except for his missing father, Harry and Ron's twins, that was all of the clan now in England except for the pregnant Mary Black who was resting at home with her nervous husband, Sirius.

That image brought a chuckle to Jonas. Sirius Black as a father. That was a scary thought, although Sirius was even more scared when he was told by his new wife. The old dog and former confirmed bachelor passed out on his own kitchen floor.

Afters had just appeared on the table when one of the House-elves appeared in the room. "Master James! Ministry wizards here to see you at Floo."

"Thank you, Slinky," James said. He started to stand up when Ron stopped him.

"Stay here. I'll see what they want. They're probably looking for me anyway."

"That's what you get for going into management instead of staying in the field like a smart Auror," Bella commented.

The Head Auror gave his top field agent and wife a dirty look that she returned with a mocking grin. Ron gave up and placed a parting kiss on her cheek.

Jonas watched Ron open the large double doors leading out of the formal dining room.

*"Avada Kedavra!"*

The green light of the Killing Curse hit the surprised form of the Head Auror. Harry Potter's youngest son dropped to the floor dead.

Jonas was the first to react as he was watching before hearing the Unforgivable. He cast the strongest shield he could over the entrance as a shower of spells started coming in the doorway.

"Ron!" Bella shouted in grief as she tried to run to her husband's body. Lily, Sally and Ginny held her back

Jimmy flipped the heavy oak table with a simple spell. It would provide some protection from spellfire. It was not a moment too soon as Jonas's shield faltered and dropped under the assault.

The Potters started to pour spells back at their attackers. Bella was particularly vicious as she unleashed a series of very dangerous, grey spells through the dining room doors.

"We can't stay here," James commented in a calm, experienced manner. "Anti-travel wards are all up."

"Suggestions?" Michael asked. The Wizengamot member might be a politician, but all the Potters received a fair amount of training outside school and received 'O's for their Defence NEWTS.

"Go out the kitchen and head for the study," Lily answered. "Only a Potter can open it. We can use Harry's Cabinet to get out of here."

James smiled proudly. "I always knew you were the smartest witch Hogwarts ever produced."

"How can she be? She married you," Katie pointed out between firing spells back at the invaders. The attackers paused momentarily when they heard laughter coming from the room holding their targets.

"On the count of three, I'll blast a hole in the wall behind us," James told them. "Then it's down the hall three doors to the study. I'll go first, then Michael, Jimmy, Ginny, Sally, Lily, Katie, Tia, Andrea, Jonas, Gideon, Fabian, and Bella. We'll move quickly. Michael and I will get the study open and hold the doors. Gideon, Fabian and Bella, keep'em off our back until we get the civilians clear. Okay? Let's move."

James fired a massive Concussion Hex that blew a four-foot diameter hole in the wall.

"Covering fire now! Let's go!" he ordered.

The fight down the hall was short and brutal. Michael fell to a Killing Curse outside the study door. His killer's body wearing Black Watch robes soon lay atop Michael's joining him in death. James was struck by a series of Bludgeoning and Cutting Hexes that left him slumped against the study door as shock set in. His wand never stopped firing spells as he transfigured debris into lions, wolves and bears to tear into the attackers.

Jimmy joined his father in defending the door long enough for his mother, sister, aunts and fiancé to get into the room. When he saw a Watchman stick his head through the hole in the dining room wall, Jimmy removed it for him and pulled his father back into the study. Then he slammed the door closed. Almost immediately, the sounds of spells hitting the door started. Jimmy paused for a second as he realized what he had just done threatened to overwhelm him. But he forced it aside for now.

“James!” Lily screamed seeing her husband. She ran to his side and started casting healing charms as quickly as she could.

“I’ll be fine, Lils,” James told her in an exhausted voice. “Michael jumped in front of the Killing Curse that had my name on it.” He took a slow painful breath. “Did everyone else make it?”

Andrea was crying in a chair next to the Cabinet. “Jonas was killed pushing me through the hole. I lost my son. How will I tell Tom...” Sally ran over to her aunt to hold her while she cried.

“We lost Aunt Bella and Uncles Gideon and Fabian,” Jimmy whispered. He glanced over to where his Aunts Katie and Tia stood off to one side holding each other and crying. “We don’t know what happened. They never left the dining room.”

“We have to get through the Cabinet, Jimmy,” James told his son. “But make sure you take the painting.” He pointed up to where the figures of Godric Gryffindor and Salazar Slytherin were watching.

“Okay, dad,” Jimmy agreed. “Let’s get you out of here.”

--BD--

### 19.20 – Harry’s Public House

Harry and Fleur were eating dinner with Michele when the outer wards announced visitors. The defensive wards were in a peaceful, standby mode. Located this close to the village with children around, having active defensives would likely lead to a criminal accident.

“What is it, Arry?” Fleur asked.

“Someone crossed the outer wards. A dozen of them moving straight towards the house,” he answered in a distracted voice. Something in this was triggering his highly experienced danger warning.

“Fleur, take Michele into my room, now.”

Michele looked up at Harry with fear in her eyes. “Gramps?”

“Michele, if you hear anything, have Fleur close her eyes and take her through the portal. Remember class?”

“When in danger, think and do. Panic later,” the young witch answered in a sing-song voice.

Harry spared her a small smile. “Exactly. Now scoot.”

Fleur carried the small girl into Harry’s room across the hall while Harry started moving down towards the front door.

He was fifteen feet away when the door blew in. Harry jumped back trying to get into a doorway before the dust cloud cleared.

Wards, activate, he hissed in Parseltongue. That should buy him a minute or two. “Michele, go now!” he yelled.

The wards delivered a high voltage shock to the attackers by the front door. Three of them dropped to the ground as the electricity caused heart attacks. Another four went down with magical arrows piercing their bodies. The two covering the back door were completely drained of magic and would wake three days later after their magical reserves recovered.

Harry could feel someone outside the wards boundary working to bring them down. That meant an unknown number of reinforcements were on their way. He had to work quickly.

Harry cast an Accio at one of the wizards laying outside his front door. When the man landed at Harry’s feet, he recognized the man’s uniform as a member of Black Watch. “What in Merlin’s name is going on here?”

*“Ennervate”*

Harry waited a second as the Watchman opened his eyes. Then he shoved his wand against the man’s throat. “Why are you here?”

“Arrest...Count...Murder of Minister and children,” the wizard gasped out.

“They think I killed those kids? And what minister?”

“Minister Crouch...killed tonight...werewolf Lupin .”

“Bloody hell!” Harry swore. Harry was confused. Remus killed the Minister? Impossible! What the hell was going on? Confusion was starting to set in as Harry tried to process what was happening.

Harry almost forgot what was going on around him when he felt the wards collapse. Shaking it off, Harry banished the Watchman out the front door, then turned and ran to his room. Harry reckoned he could fight the Watchmen but until he knew why he was fighting it would be pointless to do so.

He closed the door behind him and put a hand on the knob at the end of the bedpost. After a moment of concentration, he walked over to the Vanishing Cabinet and stepped through.

Once the cabinet door closed, the ward built into the bed knob activated. The room erupted into a white-hot fire that quickly consumed the room. The magical fire quickly spread throughout the house despite the efforts of twenty Watchman, and five Investigators to extinguish it. In minutes, the house was a smouldering pile of ash.

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### 19.25 – Harry’s Hideaway

Harry arrived to find Michele wrapped in the fierce embrace of her grandmother. It was obvious from the condition of the survivors that the Potter Manor had suffered a similar attack with devastating results.



Deciding explanations could wait, Harry helped get his father into the infirmary with Katie to look after him. Tia and Fleur got Michele into bed with a Dreamless Sleep Potion. The poor girl realized her father was dead after Andrea started crying on her and saying how sorry she was. Now Andrea was asleep in the bed next to Michele with the same potion.

Harry finally got the story from Jimmy. Harry felt a familiar guilt for sending Jonas to the party in his place. It was the same guilt he had felt for his birth parents, Cedric, Sirius and so many others; the same guilt that caused him to go backwards in time in the first place.

Harry's innocent younger brother was gone forever. Jimmy had been forced to kill in battle. Although Harry was younger his first time, he had been involved in fighting for a while before he had to deal with it. Jimmy was brought up in the peaceful, normal world Harry always dreamt of having.

Harry sent out an alert call to both sets of twins and tried to call Croaker. The secure Floo at Unspeakable headquarters didn't respond but the magical coins of the Prewitt and Weasley twins gave 'all-clear' and 'on-the-way' signals.

It was only when Harry sat down to wait for his team's arrival that a thought occurred to him when he was looking at the painting James Potter insisted on saving.

A sudden pressure clinched Harry's heart. "That damned prophecy. We are the House of the Founders. Gryffindor, Ravenclaw, Slytherin: all of them in the Potter family. Hufflepuff must be in here too. This is only the beginning."

In a single hour, Harry lost two of his three sons and the third was missing. He also lost a grandson and two son-in-laws. James survived, but he almost lost his father for a second time. A familiar pain welled up from deep inside, but Harry turned it. He couldn't afford to take the time to grieve. Too much needed to be done before he could afford that. First he had to make sure the rest of his family was safe.

Then it would be time for someone to pay for what had been done to his family.

--BD--

An hour later, Harry had his confirmation.

Both sets of twins arrived safely. Fred and George had spent a quiet evening in their shop merrily devising new products for testing on the unwary. Al and Thomas spent the evening with former classmates on a pub-crawl through Muggle London. (Sobering potions were a God-send.) They would later learn their flat had been entered and searched while they were out.

For the second time that day, Harry sat next to the Wireless listening to the Minister of Magic. However, it was a completely different Minister than that morning.

Minister Dirk Cresswell's tired and grim voice came out of the Wireless.

*"Ladies and Gentlewizards, I am sorry to be the bearer of bad tidings, but I must confirm what has already been reported in our news.*

*"Minister Crouch was assassinated today during a Ministry press conference by the werewolf Remus Lupin. The Minister's Auror guards killed the assassin too late to save the Minister. The Minister's son, Black Watch Commander Barty Crouch Jr. was on hand to be by his father's side in his final moments.*

*"This horrible, senseless tragedy builds on the appalling atrocities that have victimized Magical society since the attack on our students on the Hogwarts Express. The Ministry, through the Black Watch and the Investigation Unit, has been working around the clock to determine the one responsible for masterminding this plot. Now we know the criminal's name.*

*"During the war against Grindelwald, an Unspeakable known only as the Count fought on behalf of England. He supported the team of Albus Dumbledore, Thomas Potter, and Abraxus Malfoy in their final assault on Grindelwald's stronghold. It was during this time he*

*claimed a Life debt from Mr. Malfoy for a minor assistance. Mr. Malfoy accepted this out of honour even though the Count's assistance was not truly required.*

*"After the war, the Count slunk away in anger because he did not receive the acclaim and rewards he felt he deserved. Our investigation have shown he left England and dove into the Magical Underworld as an enforcer for hire. This led him deeper into the Darkest of magics.*

*"The count returned to England in April of 1997. Using his Dark magic, he appeared as a young man claiming the name Harry Potter. Somehow, he twisted the noble Potter family to support his deception and claim him as a son sent away for medical reasons. A son with no records and one who not even their closest friends knew of his existence.*

*"The Count spread his infection into our own Department of Mysteries. Department Head Croaker served this Dark Lord willingly. The Count's control over Headmaster Potter-Evans was so compete, the former Minister appointed the unknown 'young' man as his Defence Professor.*

*"We also have solid evidence that as Harry Potter, the Count was directly responsible for the murder of Headmaster Albus Dumbledore via poisoning. We suspect Professor Dumbledore discovered the 'Harry Potter's true identity and would have exposed him as a fraud.*

*"After the events of tonight, the Ministry acted to arrest this criminal. Lethal wards at his residence cost the lives of three Watchmen. We then pursued his trail to Potter Manor where our forces were met with a barrage of Killing Curses. Head Auror Ron Potter led the attack on his own Aurors.*

*"Despite the restraint of our Aurors and Black Watch, several members of the Potter family were killed in the search for the Count including Ron Potter, Michael Potter, Jonas Potter, Gideon Prewitt and Fabien Prewett. Bellatrix Potter and Tom Potter-Evans were captured and taken into custody. Ministry Healers are working even now to try to release them from the criminal's control.*

*"The Ministry will keep you updated as our search develops. If you see the criminal or any of his puppets, do not approach them. Floo Black Watch immediately and clear the area. This is for your own safety. Do what you must to protect your family. No action will be prosecuted that brings about the capture of or death of this Dark Lord."*

*"Thank you and may Merlin be with us all."*

"The poles are switched," Harry muttered. "They think I am a Dark Lord."

"Well, sorry Harry, but I am not getting a tattoo. Gin would kill me." Harry looked up at his grinning brother with a question on his face. "What?" Jimmy asked. "You didn't think we would leave you, did you? Sorry but your mind woogy is too strong for me to resist."

"Our ickle boy has grown up to make me so proud," Fred pretended to cry.

"Too right, brother of mine," George cried next to him.

Harry smiled proudly at the little brother he always wanted. "Okay. This is what we are going to do..."

*THE MAN WITH THE KILLING EYES,*

*THE VANQUISHER*

*AND THE REDEEMER, HAS RETURNED*

*HIS ARRIVAL MARKS THE START OF DARK'S RISE*

*THE HOUSE OF THE FOUNDERS WILL FALL TO DARK'S CHILD*

*THE POLES WILL CHANGE*

*AS LIGHT BECOMES DARK*

*AND DARK BECOMES LIGHT*

*HOPE RIDES ON THE REMNANT OF THE FOUNDERS HOUSE*

*HOPE DEPENDS ON THE FLOWERING OF FOUNDERS HEIRS*

*AND THE SOULS OF THE VANQUISHER AND THE VANQUISHED*

*IF TRIUMPHANT, THE CHILD OF DARK WILL COMPLETE  
DARKNESS'S WORK*

End of Act I

**A/N: A new website is holding the Quibbler Awards. Three of my stories were nominated, Altered Destinies, Balancing Destinies and The Sniper, plus a whole lot of really good stories. Check it out at [quibbler\(dot\)this-paradise\(dot\)com](http://quibbler(this-paradise.com)). Voting starts 26th of August.**

## Chapter 11 – Chamber of Secrets

### 19 June 1999 – Hogsmeade

Harry woke early the next morning in a room full of conjured beds. Thomas, Albus, and Jimmy still slept as Harry quietly climbed out of his bed. It had been a late night full of crying, arguments and planning. Finally, the exhausted, drained Potters were ordered off to sleep by Lily.

The Potter 'boys' shared a room whilst Andrea, Sally, Michele, Ginny, and Fleur slept in the transfigured conference room Harry had used the day before. Lily slept in the Infirmary with the wounded James plus Katie and Tia. The two women were not injured from their escape from Potter Manor, but were sleeping off a Dreamless Sleep Potion after the murders of their husbands.

Harry walked quietly through the house to the kitchen. He could feel the pain from the previous night's losses. He needed to put the pain aside until he could get Tom and Bella back safely. Then he could take the time to grieve properly.

"Harry Potter wants his tea?" Dobby asked as Harry appeared in the kitchen.

"Yes, thank you Dobby."

The little elf looked sadly up as he placed the tea cup and a breakfast plate in front of Harry. "Dobby is sorry abouts what happened to Harry Potter's family. They were evil wizards to attack yous!"

A small smile forced its way onto Harry's lips because of the deep sincerity on Dobby's face. "Thank you Dobby. I appreciate everything you did last night to help out." A proud look crossed Dobby's face for a moment before it dimmed.

"Can Dobby be asking about the other elves, Harry Potter sir?"

"Other elves?" Harry asked in a confused tone.

"The other Potter elves, sir. They were forced out of the Manor because they are loyal to the Potters. Now they have no place to go."

"And they can't come here because of the Fidelius Charm," Harry finished.

"Yes, Harry Potter sir."

Harry thought for several moments about the best way to proceed. He felt they owed something to the family's elves but he couldn't risk giving away this location.

"Dobby, ask the elves to meet me at the twins' shop in 30 minutes. I might have an idea."

A big smile filled the elf's face. "Dobby knew Harry Potter sir could help us!" With a pop, he was gone.

Harry was sipping his tea and eating the breakfast Dobby had given him when Dobby reappeared. Dobby placed a copy of the day's Daily Prophet on the table. Harry grabbed a hold of his rage when he noticed the headlines.

**Potter Family Falls Under Control of the Dark Count!**

**Minister Murdered by Werewolf Friend of Potters!**

**Former Unspeakable Hero Turns to the Dark!**

**Potters Lethal Attack Shocked Aurors Trying to Arrest Count!**

Harry threw the Prophet aside without bothering to read its rubbish. He picked up his tea and sipped whilst glaring at the offensive newspaper.

Harry felt a hideous sense of déjà vu. All the deaths in his first timeline caused by Voldemort and that damned prophecy. Starting with his parents, Cedric and Sirius, everyone close to Harry died as a result of that war. Desperation and pain drove him to take a mad chance to kill Tom Riddle before he could become Voldemort.

Instead, he found a perfect world for Harry Potter to lose himself in. No one knew who he was; he was a 'normal' wizard. Even with the fight with Grindelwald, Harry's life was everything he could have dreamt of growing up: a beautiful wife, loving children, and a family. Grindelwald never discovered The Count's identity. Targeting Tom was done out of the need for a parselmouth, not who his father was.

But now this new timeline had cost Harry. So much death caused simply for being related to Harry Potter.

Again

Harry forced himself to close his eyes and focus on his Occlumency. The skills didn't let him 'hide' his feelings or remove the emotional pain. Rather it allowed him to take a step back to focus on what he needed to be doing now.

--BD--

"I want to know what the bloody hell is going on here!"

Harry paused as he was stepping out of the Vanishing Cabinet located in the stock room of Weasley's Wizard Wheezes. He recognized the shouting voice as the youngest Weasley brother. Harry moved quietly over to the slightly open door.

"Ron, calm down," Twin One, probably Fred, said.

"You're going to do accidental magic if you don't take a breath."

Ron wasn't having it. "Don't tell me to settle down! Our sister is missing. My best mate is wanted by the Aurors as a follower of a Dark Lord! My own fiancé is part of an investigation to arrest the whole Potter family!"

Harry heard the sound of a body dropping into a chair. It was quiet for a moment. Then Ron started talking again in almost whisper that seemed almost desperate.

"Mum's a wreck between worrying about Ginny and crying about losing her brothers. Hermione has told me there's all kinds of



evidence on how Harry is the Count and he's turned the whole family Dark. But I can't believe that.

"You two have been best mates with Al and Thomas since before I was born. If they were turning Dark, you would have been the first ones to know it. You're not worried about them or Ginny and Jimmy at all. The pair of you are more overprotective of her than I am."

"Well, she is the junior prankster in the family..."

"Such a disappointment you were."

"Knock it off, you gits!" Ron raged at them. Harry risked a glance through the door to see Ron surge out of the box he'd been sitting on with his wand drawn. "Tell me what the hell is going on or I'll hex the pair of you!"

Harry could see this was going downhill fast as the twins started to taunt Ron to carry out his threat. Harry quietly stepped into the room and silently summoned the three Weasley's wands.

"Harry!" Fred protested, "We were just going to have a little fun with our ickle brother Ronnie-kins here!"

After the last twenty-four hours, Harry couldn't even summon a smile at the twins' antics. "Enough you two. I think Ron's had enough."

Ron was staring in shock at Harry's unexpected arrival. "Bloody Hell! Where did you come from?"

Harry ignored the question. "Jimmy and your sister are safe. No, I'm not Dark. None of the Potters are. Yes, I really am Harry Potter and James and Lily are my parents. Sort of."

"Sort of?"

A grim smile crossed Harry's lips for an instant. "It's a really long story."

"Tell me," Ron growled back. "Hermione kicked me out when I told her that the Ministry was wrong about the Potters. She claims they

have 'irrefutable proof 'that you are guilty of killing Professor Dumbledore and that you really are this Count and not who you claim you are. Tell me." The last two words were said with an under layer of desperation and pain.

Harry gave Ron a shrewd look. "You are going to have to trust us a bit. We can't do this here."

"Are you sure about this, Harry?" George asked.

Harry gave a small shrug. "I'm going to have to explain to Ginny and Fleur when they wake up anyway. What's one more?"

Ron was looking at his brothers' complete lack of concern. "Okay, I'll do it."

Harry nodded in acceptance. "George, Stun him and take him to the safe house. I'll be along in a bit."

Three minutes later, George was walking a floating, stunned Ron Weasley into the Cabinet. Harry prevented the pranksters from doing anything to their brother's unconscious body although George 'accidentally' floated him into the doorframe.

Once they were gone, Fred commented, "The merchants on the Alley are really upset about all this. They are dividing into two camps, one believes the Potters are innocent but the majority are directing their anger for the werewolf attacks at you. When we went for our morning tea, a group of them were trying to outdo each other in how much they hated the Potters."

"Hmm, sounds like Fifth year," Harry smiled grimly.

"Crouch Jr. was made Sr. Undersecretary by Cresswell. Dad told us this morning. Thorenson was promoted into head of the Watch. Also, Bones was sacked for putting Uncle Ron in as Head Auror. They are blaming Uncle Ron for weakening Crouch Seniors Auror guard to allow Remus to get at him. Scrimgeour is the new head of DMLE. Shackbolt moved back to become Head Auror."

"All in one night," Harry scoffed.

“Boss?”

“This was a setup, Fred. The attack on the Express, Remus, Crouch, all of it. Someone went to a lot of trouble to frame us and me specifically.

“Think about it. The attack on the Manor, my house, and arresting Tom within minutes of each other. That took some planning and it was all done in the wake of the Minister getting assassinated? A couple of hours maybe, but this was too quick. They knew what their plan was before the Minister ever set foot in that press conference.”

“Who?” Fred asked. “Crouch Jr?”

Harry frowned in concentration for a moment. “Maybe, based on what he did to his father in the last timeline he is an obvious suspect. But I don’t want to get too fixated on him. The one I knew was more a fanatic follower type rather than a leader.”

Harry looked up at Fred. “Play your role of anxious brother today. See what else you and George can find out. I want to know where Tom and Bella are being held.”

Fred nodded, “We’ll do that.”

A series of pops announced the arrival of the Potter elves led by Dobby ending their conversation. Fred returned to the front of the store to open for the day while Harry sat down to talk with the elves and give them an assignment.

--BD--

The hideaway was a lot louder when Harry returned from WWW. George had returned to the shop after dropping of Ron, but the living room was filled with Jimmy, Ginny, Sally, Michele, Al and Thomas sitting around the room. Jimmy was telling Ron what had happened at Potter Manor the night before. Ginny sat next to Jimmy crying as her boyfriend told of the deaths of her two Prewitt uncles.

“But why are they attacking the Potters?” Ron asked in a plaintive voice. “If they want a Dark family, why not the Malfoys?”

"That is a good question, Ron," Harry commented as he entered the conversation. Ron looked up in surprise as Harry managed to startle him for the second time that day. Harry turned to Sally and asked, "Could you please go see if Fleur is awake? I want to go over this once." Then looking at Al, he said, "Please get my Pensieve. That should make this a lot easier."

Sally stood up saying, "Fleur is in the infirmary with Mum. I told Ginny a bit last night before we went to sleep." Harry only nodded silently as his sister left the room.

The room waited in silence as Harry moved to his customary chair. Dobby wouldn't let anyone else sit in it as Al and Thomas learnt on a very memorable occasion.

Fleur and Sally arrived with Tia and Katie just as Al walked in with the delicate magical bowl. Harry conjured a small table in the centre of the room for Al to put the Pensieve.

Harry walked over to his daughters and wrapped them in a silent hug. The women, who were older than his mother, squeezed him back. The rest of the room was silent watching the three.

After a moment, Tia whispered, "We're okay for now. We took a Calming Potion so we can help you with this."

"Are you sure?"

Katie Prewitt nee Potter-Evans nodded. "Gideon and Fabian would want us to help Ron and Ginny deal with this." Harry looked her in the eyes for a moment before nodding and moving back to his chair. Tia settled onto a sofa and pulled Michele into her lap while Katie sat next to Ginny on the other side from where Jimmy sat.

Harry gathered his thoughts and then started to speak. "I think it is only fair to let you know a couple of things about what is going on. I don't know why the Potters have been targeted, or by whom. I have a theory about why I might have been targeted."

"My family has already heard this story many times. In fact I believe it was Sally's favourite bedtime story."

Sally turned a bit pink at that.

"I am Harry James Potter. I was born on 31 July 1980 to James and Lily Potter." Harry paused a moment. "But not this James and Lily Potter."

"I do not understand," Fleur said, speaking for the first time. "What ozzer James and Lily Potter iz there?" Harry noted that the Veela Healer's French accent was getting more pronounced due to her emotional tiredness.

"I will show you all my memories to back this all up. I will even take Veritaserum afterwards to assure you everything I said is true. But please, just listen."

Harry started talking about Voldemort and his Pureblood-based terror campaign. When he mentioned the Order of the Phoenix and its members, the Weasleys looked surprised. Harry told them about the prophecy and Voldemort's first fall and how he became the Boy-Who-Lived. He touched briefly on his life at the Dursleys before getting his Hogwarts letter. He told them about meeting Hagrid for the first time.

Harry moved quickly through his Hogwarts years. He mentioned his best friends but never by name. The Tournament was mentioned but only as it related to Voldemort's return. He described Dumbledore's death at Snape's hands and the battles between the Light and the Death Eaters that followed. Harry didn't want to mention names until so they would listen and not react emotionally until they saw the memories for themselves.

And it was more fun that way.

"At the end, all of those close to me were dead. My girlfriend died saving my life. I won, but it was an empty victory."

Harry had spoken for over an hour nonstop. He looked up to see everyone watching him intently.

When he glanced curiously at Tia, she said, "We've heard the story but never from you directly."

Harry simply nodded. "There is more but it is a good place to pause. Now I will let you see the story in more detail from my memories."

Harry pulled a 'highlight reel' of his life in the first timeline out with his wand and placed it in the bowl. It was a carefully selected group of memories that highlighted his early Hogwarts years, the Golden Trio, Voldemort's return, the Battle of the Ministry, the Second War, and the Final Battle. It was enough to tell the story without too much unnecessary detail. Still, Ron, Ginny, and Fleur all would see their own deaths.

The other Potters moved forward first to use the Pensieve. Ron, Ginny, and Fleur moved in a bit more cautiously.

Dobby brought Harry a cup of tea whilst the group viewed Harry's memories. Harry had no intention of sitting through all of that again.

It was almost an hour later when they started to emerge from the memories. Ron emerged and turned a pale face to look at Harry in shock. "That was all true?" Harry nodded. "Bloody Hell," Ron whispered.

"You knew all this?" Harry heard Ginny ask Jimmy.

"I didn't learn most of it until after Harry came back," Jimmy admitted "It weirded me out to know you were with my brother in another timeline."

Fleur looked just as gobsmacked as the rest. "I married their brozer?" Harry nodded and then winced as he heard Fleur start swearing in French. She was surprisingly good at it.

Sally was smiling mischievously at her eldest brother. "Merlin, Harry, I'm glad you didn't bring that much excitement to your classes this year."

Michele nodded her agreement but her eyes looked a bit haunted at the image of what her grandfather had become in the first timeline.

"Well, it was usually the Defence professor trying to kill me, so I was rather safe this year," Harry defended himself with a weak grin.

"Tell them the next part," Tia commented with a sad smile.

"After losing everyone, I was given a chance to go back in time to put things right. The plan was to kill Voldemort before he learnt magic and started his terror. So, I went back in time using a device from the Department of Mysteries to kill Tom Marvolo Riddle as an infant.

Harry ignored the shocked gasp from those unfamiliar with the story. He just continued talking.

"Since Thomas Potter, my grandfather, would wonder where this new Potter came from, I took the name James Evans. There is no magical Evans family so I figured my mother's maiden name was safe. Using my middle name just made sense at the time. I bought this house and started looking for Tom Riddle in London orphanages. Shortly after I started searching, I found a group of boys beating a younger boy in London. I scared them off and took the boy to St. Mungos. Because the boy was Muggle-raised, Wizengamot law made me his magical guardian since I was the one that introduced him to the magical world."

A small smile crossed Harry's face as he thought about that time. "I later learnt that I could have had him Obliviated instead, but the Medi-witch neglected to mention that fact." Tia, Al, and Thomas snickered knowing exactly who the medi-witch had been.

"I ended up adopting the boy and raising him as my own son. I never regretted it. He helped me deal with everything that I had endured growing up and in the war. I think he enjoyed it too."

"The boy was your Uncle Tom, wasn't it?" Ginny asked Jimmy.

"Yep. You should hear him tell this story. It's very funny."

"What happened to the baby Voldemort you went back to kill?" Ron bluntly asked. "Did you kill him?"

"I guess you could say that from a certain point of view." The Potters all smiled with Harry. "It will be easier if I just show you."

Harry moved back to the Pensieve and pulled back the memories it contained. Then he pulled the memories of his life as James Evans and put them in the bowl. This time he entered the Pensieve with them. These were good memories for the most part and Harry wanted to see Sarah again.

--BD--

"You went back in time to kill Voldemort and ended up raising him as your son?" Ginny asked as the group emerged from the Pensieve a short time later. When Harry nodded, Ginny smirked and commented, "You really are a Potter, aren't you?"

The other Potters in the room snickered at her comment.

"What does that say about you if you're marring into the family?" Thomas asked her. Ginny showed her maturity and stuck her tongue out at him.

"So Hermione was partially right. You really are the Count," Ron said, bring them back on topic. "But the whole Dark Lord thing is not true."

"That is right, Ronald. I'm glad Harry finally told you all the truth."

The whole room turned in surprise to see Luna sitting in the corner of the room.

Harry simply grinned as Al asked, "How did you get in here with the Fidelius Charm up?"

"I followed the fraktoids. They told me where to go," Luna answered as it was the most obvious thing in the world. Harry just shrugged it off as more of the mystery that was Luna Lovegood.

"Luna's known about Harry for years," Ginny said aloud in a tone of realization. She turned to Jimmy. "Why was she told first?"

Harry answered for his brother. He looked fondly at Luna and said, "Luna was never told. Somehow, she remembered everything from the last timeline."



Luna smiled dreamily at Harry. "I wanted to volunteer to be the Count's Insane Henchwitch."

"What?" The question came from half the room including Harry.

"Well, Grindelwald had Christine and Voldemort had Bellatrix, so the Count can have Luna," Luna answered with a happy grin.

"Would that make her a Luna-tic?" Al asked his brother in a mock whisper the whole room heard.

"Albus, don't make me hurt you," Luna replied in a happy voice. "At least, not before we have a safe word." Harry laughed for the first time since the previous night's attacks. The rest of the room seemed split on joining Harry's laughter and shock over Luna's innuendo.

After his laughter passed, Harry smirked. "Okay Luna. You have the job."

Luna started clapping and jumping up and down. "Oh goody! Now we can get the evidence Daddy needs to prove the Ministry is training a herd of assassin heliopaths to take over the world!"

Harry snorted at the normal Luna behaviour. He also noticed that Thomas seemed to be enjoying just watching the little blonde witch bounce up and down. Harry didn't know what having Luna here would mean, but he was sure she would keep them on their toes.

--BD--

By general agreement, the group broke up to allow them to think about everything they had learnt from Harry's memories. Dobby popped in with tea and butterbeer with biscuits. He gave Harry a small nod with his big eyes wide open.

Harry waited a bit for everyone to finish and stood up. "Everyone, can I have your attention?"

"Obviously we can't all stay in this house but I don't think it would be safe for you to try to leave the country. Even if we could, there is a good chance the foreign Ministries would hand you right back if they

found you. So, I asked Dobby and the other Potter elves to work on a little project this morning.

“We’ve set up rooms for everyone right through that Cabinet over there. It goes to the safest place I could think of.”

“Where is that, Dad?” Tia asked.

Harry gave her a little smirk. “I wouldn’t want to ruin the surprise.”

Harry walked over to the Cabinet and opened the door. “Who wants to go first?”

Michele stood and walked over to Harry. In a soft voice she asked, “Can I have a room next to yours, Gramps?”

Harry took her hand. “I’m sure we can do that, dear.” Harry led her into the Cabinet.

Harry led the group into what looked like a medium sized foyer except it had the Cabinet where the front door would normally be. Windows on either side of the Cabinet showed an idyllic country pasture outside.

Dobby stood in the doorway leading further into the house. “Masters and Misses can be coming this way to see the rest of Harry Potter sir’s new hiding place.” The excited little elf was hopping excitedly in a way that was eerily reminiscent of Luna’s happy dance just a short time before.

The group moved into a large room laid out similar to the Gryffindor common room right down to the large fireplace except it was done in blue and gold. A pair of staircases led up exactly where the stairs to the girls and boys dorms were located in the Gryffindor Tower. A third staircase stood at the end of a small hallway next to the fireplace. A double door marked ‘Hospital Wing’ sat against the opposite wall.

Michele was the first one to notice the windows. In a quiet, subdued voice, she asked, “Gramps, why does it look like it’s snowing outside now?”

"They are like the windows at the Ministry. The elves can set them to show a number of scenes," Harry answered. "But it will show day and night at the same time the rest of England does otherwise living underground messes with your body clock. They can also set them to show what is really happening on the Hogwarts grounds. Come fall you could even watch the Quidditch matches through this window."

"Wicked!" Ron gasped with wide excited eyes; his concerns and fears momentarily forgotten by the prospect of Quidditch. Harry snickered. This Ron might have more confidence, but he was still the same Ron when it came to his favourite game.

Katie came back from checking out the 'Hospital Wing'. It was really just a couple of beds and a potions cabinet with some other supplies too. "Where are we really, Dad?"

"Someplace they will never find us. The Chamber of Secrets"

--BD--

The stairs led up to a series of smallish rooms that while not ornate were very comfortable. Between the room size and a bit of judicious House-elf magic, each of the Potter Clan and their guests had a room of their own. Michele quickly claimed the one next to Harry's room.

Harry looked around the rooms in approval. "Dobby, you and the others did a fantastic job down here."

The excitable elf's smile looked close to swallowing his own head. "Thanks you, Master Harry Potter Sir!"

"Please let the others know that I said thank you." Harry could have sworn Dobby's smile grew even wider as he popped away.

Harry walked down to the common room. Thomas and Al joined him from the new Hospital Ward. They had just brought the still sleeping James over from the Hogsmeade house.

"Where does that lead?" Al asked pointing to the stairs next to the fireplace.

“Salazar Slytherin’s personal study”

“What?” the Slytherin twin gasped in shock.

“This area used to be Slytherin’s ritual room. The top of the stairs there was the mouth of a huge statue of Salazar after the Dark Magics started to twist him. Up there is the room he left the basilisk in stasis and it connects to his study. The door’s transfigured from the statue but you still need to use Slytherin’s parseltongue password to open it.”

“This is the study that was under your Hogwart’s office?” Thomas asked.

“Your uncle never brought you down here?”

“No, can we see it?” Thomas asked. Al nodded his agreement to the question.

“Okay,” Harry agreed. “I want to check some things anyway.”

Harry led them up the stairs. At the door he hissed, Speak to me Salazar Slytherin, greatest of the Hogwarts Four. The door swung open, allowing them access.

“Humble bugger,” Al muttered from behind Harry.

Harry led the twins into a large room of rough dressed stone. A number of torches burned in their holders lighting up the large room.

Master Harry? a voice hissed. You brought me fresh meat?

Hello Salazar, Harry hissed in answer with a small chuckle. These are my grandsons, Al and Thomas. They also speak your tongue.

Ah, so you and Master Tom would not like me to eat them? Pity. They look rather tasty.

Harry smiled briefly. We would appreciate not doing so.

The thirty-five foot long basilisk slithered into view. Thomas and Al immediately moved to cover their eyes but Harry stopped them.

“Relax, Salazar can control his gaze. Otherwise they would be killing themselves every time they passed a mirror or any other reflective surface.”

Master Harry, you taste like rage and sadness, the huge snake commented.

My family was attacked. Tom was taken prisoner. My other two sons have been killed along with Tom’s son. Both my daughters lost their husbands. The twins looked sad at the reminder of the loss of their father while Salazar pulled back and hissed furiously.

Master, let me strike at them! They must free Master Tom!

Even as angry as he was, the last thing Harry wanted was a thirty-five foot basilisk rampaging through the Ministry. Even as tempting as it sounded.

We are trying to find him now. I will let you know if there is any way you can help us.

Salazar didn’t appear mollified but he nodded his huge head. Very well. I will resume my watch until I’m needed.

As the huge snake moved away, Al asked, “His watch?”

“See the large tunnels leading out of here? They go all through the castle. The original Salazar wanted them for his guardian to move anywhere the school was being attacked. This Salazar can see through the special stone where the tunnels meet school hallways and classrooms to watch for danger.”

“So we had a giant snake watching us the whole time we were at school and didn’t know it?” Al asked incredulously.

“It would seem so,” Harry vaguely agreed. “Come on, this way.”

Harry led the younger wizards into a small kitchen area that looked completely modern. “Tom upgraded this area when he was using my office in the school.”

Harry led the way into Salazar Slytherin's study.

The room was about three times the size of the Headmaster's office. The ceiling stretched up about fourteen feet above their heads. A large stone fireplace filled the wall directly across from their door. Two more doors stood on the wall immediately on either side of the fireplace. Massive bookcases filled the two walls running between Tom and James and the fireplace. The shelves were filled with a large number of books and scrolls. In the centre of the room stood a large desk. It was of massive proportions. A comfortable-looking chair stood behind the desk. Above the fireplace was a painting of Hogwarts.

"Bloody hell," Thomas said in shock. "Look at the ceiling! It's just like the Great Hall!" Harry snorted slightly at the déjà vu as the ceiling reacted to the prompt and changed to show the empty Great Hall as looking down from above.

"Watch this. Charms classroom. Gryffindor common room. Entrance Hall." At each name the view changed to show a bird's eye view of the named room.

"When Tom and I first found this place it only showed the Great Hall, the classrooms, the halls and the Slytherin common room. We added the other common rooms and staff offices. Tom also was able to add sound too."

"Wicked!" the twins breathed in agreement.

Harry walked over to the painting of Hogwarts. "Between that and this, we have the ultimate home pitch advantage here at Hogwarts."

"This painting?" Thomas asked. Then his eyes lit up. "Wait a minute! I solemnly swear I am up to no good!"

The painting changed to read:

**The Count and Countess**

**With Assistance and Inspiration from**

## **Messrs. Prongs, Padfoot, and Moony**

### **Presents**

#### **The Marauders' Map, Mark II**

The writing faded as it changed into a map of Hogwarts. Like the original Marauder's Map, this Map marked the names of everyone in the castle or on the grounds. Each name was trimmed in a colour to highlight House affiliation, staff, or visitors. This time of the year, the Map should show an almost empty school except for a few staff members that stayed year round.

Except, right now the Map showed close to thirty Visitor flagged dots in and around Harry's staff office. More could be seen in the Headmaster's office and the Defence classroom.

"What do you think they are looking for?" Thomas asked.

"You tell me," Harry responded.

Thomas felt like he was back in school. His grandfather often did that when he was training the two sets of twins.

"Well, evidence that you are the Count or clues to where we fled to would be my top two choices."

Al frowned. "They would still have to search if only for appearances, but I agree they are probably trying to find us. Unless they find a parselmouth, they won't be able to open the Chamber even if they knew where it is."

"I changed the password anyway," Harry commented absently while watching the map. "Potter's office," he called out.

The ceiling above them swirled into a new image that displayed Harry's office. It looked as if the Black Watch were standing upside down on the roof above Harry and his grandsons.

Harry first noticed they had destroyed his office, tearing all the furniture apart, throwing his books off the shelves, and the remaining

portraits off the walls. "Glad I thought to tell Dobby to get the Map out of there this morning."

"There's that big bastard, Thorenson," Thomas growled as the huge wizard entered Harry's office.

The three Potters sat watching and listened as the new head of the Black Watch directed his people in the systematic destruction of the office.

Finally, the lead investigator turned to Thorenson and said, "Sir, we found nothing to indicate where they might have gone. We did find a notebook labelled 'Travels' but it's just filled with odd lines."

Harry snorted slightly. "It's my records from my year travelling. Where I went and what I saw. What restaurant did a good steak That kind of thing. I wrote in parseltongue on a lark. I had this image of a latter-day Hermione thinking she'd found a great ancient spellbook only to find it's a travel guide with some off-colour comments."

"Well, I hope they spend a lot of time trying to figure it out," Al replied.

Their observations were interrupted by a chirping noise coming from inside the old but well-preserved desk. Harry walked over and opened a drawer. Pulling an object out, Harry commented, "Dobby must have moved everything from my desk too." Before the twins could comment, Harry activated the device in his hand.

A voice came from the small disk in Harry's hand. "Harry?"

"Hi, Sirius. Are you two okay?"

"Well. One of my best mates reportedly assassinated the Minister of Magic and was killed himself. The other one is wanted as a follower of a Dark Lord, you! My wife lost her father and I've been trying to reach you for the last twelve hours! How do you think we are doing?!"

"Things have been a bit tense for us too, Sirius," Harry growled. "Survival and all that."



The dog animagus visibly took a deep breath. "Sorry Harry. We've just been very concerned. The Aurors have been her three times today already. They would have given Mary veritaserum if not for the baby."

"Are they watching you now?"

Sirius nodded. "They are trying to be discrete but I spotted one out front and two watching the back when Mary let Padfoot out into the yard. I think they are using us as bait."

Harry had to agree. "They are probably doing the same thing with Tom and Bella. If they can't find me, make me come to them." Harry looked directly into godfather/grandson-in-law's eyes. "I take it you want in?"

"Code of the Marauders First Rule- you mess with one of us, you mess with all of us."

"Okay, get your things packed over the next few days. Shrink them and keep them handy at all times. I won't say anything now, but be ready."

A sly grin crossed Sirius's worn face. "You have something in mind." It was not a question.

"Code of the Marauders Third Rule – Hit hard, hit fast, and leave chaos in your wake."

"Damn, and I'm going to miss it!"

"Don't worry," Harry assured him, "I'll be sure to get plenty of pictures."

--BD--

It was late that night when Fleur found Harry staring into the fireplace of the common room. He was sitting in a chair that was in the same position that was his favourite spot in the Gryffindor common room. The Veela Healer settled into the couch closest to Harry's chair.

Before she could say a word, Harry spoke. "I'm sorry you were dragged into this, Fleur. I'd send you home if I could."

The young French witch simply looked at Harry for a moment. "I would not leave now even if I could."

Harry stirred a bit and looked at her for the first time. A single raised brow asked his question.

"Young Michele needs me too much for me to leave now," Fleur answered simply. "I believe your story. Your memories of the other me are somewhat embarrassing but I think are unfortunately true." Fleur seemed to hesitate a bit and her face turned a bit pink, "I was rather insecure in school. Was I liked for my appearance rather than who I was?" Fleur looked up and met Harry's eyes. "I know that it is possible to modify memories to a degree but not make completely new ones with some much detail and such duration."

Harry smirked. "I can understand that. I was rather a moody git in school too. Being the Boy-Who-Lived left me wondering who was trying to use me for my fame. The constant attacks by the press and the school gossips didn't help either."

"I need to talk to you about Michele," Fleur said turning to her originally planned topic.

"Is the lycanthropy getting worse?"

"We need to find out what her mother's background was. Something in it is at odds with the curse. Without knowing, I might kill her accidentally. I know it is a magical creature of some type, but I have found nothing that matches the trace magical signature in her core.

"The only thing we can do is take her to America and try to trace her mother. And it must be soon."

Harry sighed and turned back to the fire. Getting out of England was going to be very hard with the level of alert the Ministry was maintaining. The Count could do it easily, but with a Healer and a sick little girl in tow? Especially two females as beautiful as these two; they will attract attention even in disguise thanks to their auras.

“Do you know how risky that will be?”

“I have lost two patients during my training. I would not like to have Michele be my third. She is too precious and has too much promise.”

Harry considered Fleur for a moment. This was the Fleur he remembered from his Horcrux hunt.

Luna dropped onto the couch next to Fleur. “You should go, Harry,” she said in a dreamy voice.

Harry hadn’t even seen her approaching them. “Luna, do you know something?”

Luna absently reached up and plucked off one of her radish earrings and bit into it. “Someone has to go with Fleur and Michele to get them out of the country and protect them. Her daddy is gone and Voldemort isn’t up for travelling today. The lackspurts got into his hair.”

A contemplative look crossed Luna’s face. “I guess that’s why he got rid of it before,” she mumbled. Fleur starred at the odd little blonde but Harry just stepped on his impatience with an old understanding of Luna.

Harry glanced at Fleur. “Can she wait for three days before we leave?”

Fleur looked shocked. “You agree just because this one makes some odd comments?”

“I never discount anything Luna says. I might not understand it but when I look back I usually see that following her advice is a good idea. At least, when I can get a clue what she is talking about.”

“Be nice, Harry,” Luna admonished in a serene voice.

--BD--

22 June 1999 – Chamber of Secrets

It had been three days since the attack on the Potters.

The Ministry and Black Watch continued to tear the country apart looking for signs of the Potters. Every day the Daily Prophet carried stories about attacks on wealthy magical families. Three Wizengamot members had been slain with all of their families. Werewolves and vampires led by the 'Dark Count' left destroyed and mangled bodies behind. A number of the children were missing leading to fears they were being Turned by the dark creatures.

The wealthy and powerful of the wizarding world were throwing all their weight behind the Minister's efforts to stop the Dark Count. The Wizengamot overwhelmingly voted in favour of increasing the size of the Black Watch by tenfold. Veteran Hit Wizards were being hired into the Black Watch from all over the world. Outraged volunteers were signing up for training to help fight the 'scourge of the nation'.

Harry dropped the morning's Prophet onto the kitchen table in disgust. "Well, that proves a Dark Lord is running things at the Ministry."

"Why iz that?" Fleur asked.

James answered for his son. "Because the Ministry isn't competent enough to react this efficiently on its own. Someone has to be giving them orders."

Harry chuckled mirthlessly as he agreed. "The Black Watch is being trained now as soldiers. The best of the Aurors are trained like Muggle SWAT. They storm in and take their suspect alive if possible; kill only as an absolutely last resort. Even after years of fighting Voldemort their official policy still called for Stunners and Binding charms unless the Death Eaters escalated to Killing Curses.

"This," he said pointing at the paper, "is something completely different. Hit Wizards are trained to either protect a target or eliminate it, as in kill. An Auror might be trained to a higher one-on-one duelling basis, but a Hit Wizard isn't fighting a duel. Unspeakables are trained to fight the same way. Do what you have to do to win and complete your mission."

Fred and George came bouncing into the room like they'd been shot from a cannon.

"Oh, great Prank Lord! Your minions have returned from doing your bidding!"

"Everything is in place?"

The Weasley twins drew up in mock salutes. "All pranking materials are in place. As are the brooms outside the Ministry. They are transfigured to look like Muggle parking meters."

"It's too bad most of the Purebloods will miss the fun of your diversion," Fred commented with a long face.

"How many times do we get to do magic in front of Muggles and not get sent to Azkaban for it?" George asked.

Fred turned to his brother and commented, "Of course, if they catch us we are going there anyway."

George nodded, "True, my brother. But do you know what that means?"

The twins smiled and wrapped each other in an over-the-top hug. "We can do whatever we want because they can only kill us once!"

"Ah, but we have the best prank of all!" Thomas proclaimed as he stepped into the kitchen.

"You will cry yourselves to sleep wishing you were half as cool as us!" Al stated as he joined his brother. The two sets of twins eyed each other in challenge.

"Oh, sweet Merlin," Jimmy whispered. "Harry, is London going to be standing when they get back?"

Harry shrugged. "I already promised Padfoot that we'd get pictures."

**A/N: Special thanks to Jbern for permission to use his Code of the Marauders from his story [The Lie I've Lived](#). If you haven't**

**read this story I strongly suggest you check this out. It's one of my two favourite WIPs.**

**For something completely different, older readers can check out my rather long one-shot called 'Harry Potter - Mercenary' from my author page.**

## Chapter 12 – Potters Strike Back

### 22 June 1999 – Diagon Alley

Diagon Alley and its smaller branches is the premier shopping and business district in Wizarding Britain. It was the hub of life for wizards and witches from England, Wales and Scotland. Even Irish magicals routinely made the trip across the Irish Sea to shop and conduct business.

During the day, the Alley bustled with activity as wizards and witches shopped, dined and conducted the normal business of the centre of British magical life. The Daily Prophet, Gringotts, Obscurus Books and Nimbus all had their home offices located here.

However, with the recent trouble, the Alley was abandoned after 20.00. All the shops closed and most of the restaurants closed. Only a few of the seedier pubs and the Leaky Cauldron remained open for business.

Auror Oliver Smallpiece suppressed a shiver as he walked through the darkened Diagon Alley. It was just about two hours until his midnight shift change. The twenty-two year veteran of the Auror corps just wanted a quiet shift before he could return home to his wife.

His partner, Colin MacFergus followed him several paces back. It was standard patrolling protocol not to be too close so that a single curse couldn't effect both Aurors. MacFergus was close enough to cover Smallpiece with a shield or fire on an attacker. It was a tried and proven tactic.

But Oliver sure wished *he* was the trailing partner tonight. Unfortunately, as the senior partner he had to lead his younger counterpart in the field.

All of the UK had gone mad in the last four days. Since the attempt to arrest the Count resulted in the deaths of a number of Watchmen and Aurors, the Count's forces had attacked targets throughout Britain. The death of three Wizengamot members was bad enough, but the constant attacks on children and their disappearances had even the most hardened Auror fuming. Smallpiece wasn't convinced in his

former boss, Ron Potter's involvement but the evidence against 'Harry Potter' being the former Unspeakable was solid.

A small clinking noise ahead brought Smallpiece's mind back to the task. He stopped and cautiously peered ahead with his wand pointed towards the noise.

"What is it?" MacFergus hissed.

Smallpiece motioned with his free hand for his partner to be quiet. He slowly inched forward trying to see the source of the noise.

"Is it one of the orange things that were reported?"

Smallpiece suppressed the urge to turn and hex his rookie partner. Before he could repeat his order to stay silent some ... thing wandered out of the small gap between Madam Malkin's and Flourish & Blotts.

It looked like a demented, twisted house-elf. It had the same size and ears of an elf but its skip looked more like scales. It looked up at Smallpiece and seemed to grin. The Auror noticed its mouth was filled with small, wickedly short looking teeth. It let loose a weird, high pitched giggle that sent chills up Smallpiece's spine.

"What the hell is that?" MacFergus asked with his Scottish accent coming to the fore.

The creature suddenly darted forward to grab the younger Auror's robe. MacFergus started yelling as the small form scurried up and started pulling at the wizard's hair.

"Get'em off! Geoff me!"

The odd creature was screaming in malicious glee as MacFergus screamed in panic. The young wizard staggered out into the middle of the Alley as he struggled with his strange attacker. The Auror finally got a grip on it and heaved the creature off his head. The creature screeched as it flew through the air and smashed into the side of Florean Fortescue's Ice Cream Parlour.



“What in Merlin’s name is that thing?!” MacFergus yelled as he tried to stop the bleeding from a bitten ear.

Smallpiece said, “Get your wand out and back me up.” The odd creature was moving slowly. The impact with the wall must have dazed it. As Smallpiece summoned a small glowing orb of light, he told his partner, “Summon help. I have no idea what this thing is.”

The red sparks from MacFergus’s wand had just started when the creature looked up. It started to climb to its feet.

“Don’t move!” Smallpiece ordered. “*Perfectus Totalis!*”

The creature froze when the spell hit its small chest. The senior Auror could see rage in its eyes. Smallpiece could hear the sound of boots as he covered the creature with his wand. He glanced towards the sound to see eight Aurors coming.

A strangled choke pulled Smallpiece’s attention back. “Err, sir, that thing is starting to break free,” MacFergus warned.

Smallpiece turned and saw the creature was starting to move in slow motion. But it was getting faster with each heartbeat. What the hell is that thing?

“*Reducto!*”

Smallpiece looked on as the rookie’s Reductor Curse hit the creature. The creature’s body exploded into little pieces as the spell smashed through the large ice cream shop window.

“What are you doing, MacFergus?” Smallpiece demanded.

“It was moving again!” the younger Auror protested.

Smallpiece inhaled to yell at his partner when he noticed his shift supervisor, Albert Swenson, had arrived. The Auror threw a frown at his partner and turned to the supervisor. “Sir, the situation is contained.”

“What was the situation, Auror?”

"Sir, some weird creature attacked MacFergus. I got it in a Full-Body Bind. MacFergus hit it with a Reductor when it started to break free. I have no idea what it was. Looked like a cross between a house-elf and a Kappa except it had these teeth. Evil looking thing."

Swenson frowned in disapproval before saying, "Let's see your creature."

"Yes, sir. Over here sir." MacFergus gestured towards the remains of the shop window.

Swenson stepped over and looked into the shop. He looked for a moment and then asked, "What the hell is that?"

Smallpiece stepped up and looked into the shop. What he saw scared him.

The pieces of the creature were scattered around the room. And they were ... bubbling and growing as he was watching. From the shadows, a slight popping noise was heard.

"That was the same noise I heard..."

Something flew out of the darkness to smash into Smallpiece's face. It took a moment for him to realize it was ice cream. He spluttered as ice cream ran down his face. Then more popping noises came. In his horror, he saw what had happened.

Each of the chunks of the creature had changed and grown. Now each one formed its own creature, just as large as the original. However, rather than being identical, each was a bit different. Smallpiece's observations were stopped short as a barrage of ice cream flew out of the shop and at the Aurors outside.

"What the hell is going on here?"

One of the creatures leapt from the shop with a spoon in one hand and latched onto MacFergus. It started trying to stab the rookie Auror in the chest while the surrounding Aurors watched in stunned disbelief.

“Ahh, get it off! That bloody hurts!”

As Smallpiece reached out to grab the malicious little creature, a swarm of them erupted from the shop. One flew by with a pair of bat-like wings. Another had the legs of a spider. All of them were strange, ugly looking little things.

A full scale battle erupted between the Aurors and the little creatures. It was chaos as the spells flew about trying to kill off the creatures. Smallpiece found himself trapped against the wall of Madam Malkins by a giant spider web. And the spider-like creature was eyeing him as if he was dinner.

A strange screeching noise put a temporary stop to the battle. All the creatures stopped fighting and turned to the source of the noise. The Aurors started to press their advantage but a second screech forced them to turn against their wills.

Another creature had appeared in the destroyed ice cream shop's window. It wore a formal blue dress robe with stars and moons on it. It had a pair of half-moon glasses and a long white beard. It seemed to smile at the Aurors and the wizards would latter swear it had a twinkle in its eyes.

The bearded creature started to make a speech. At least, so the Aurors assumed it was. The other creatures seemed to cheer at points. The speech seemed to reach a fever pitch when the creatures all turned and bolted all parts of the Alley leaving the stunned Aurors in their wake.

The confused Aurors looked around in indecision as the creatures scattered. A small cough made Smallpiece turn back to the bearded creature.

It smiled again and then it did something that almost made the hardened Auror faint.

It spoke in perfect English.

“Trust me. It's all for the greater good.”

Then it dropped out of sight.

For the next several hours, chaos reigned on Diagon Alley. More and more Aurors were called as most spells had no positive effect on the creatures. Cutting and Blasting Curses only succeeded in creating more of the creatures. Binders and Stunners soon wore off. It was only when the first of the Watchmen arrived and used the Killing Curse was something effective found. Until then the creatures alternated between attacking the Aurors and ransacking the various shops.

The chaos reached a whole new level when one of the creatures found his way into Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes. The creature managed to set off the entire display of Basic Blaze Boxes in the front window, filling the air with Weasleys' Wild-Fire Whiz-Bangs.

Atop a nearby building, a pair of orang-utans watched the chaos in amusement. There was a sudden blurring of motion and the two primates were replaced by a pair of young men with hair the same colour as the orang-utans they replaced.

"The Gremlins worked even better than we'd planned," one of the redheads commented while snickering at one Gremlin dressed in witches robes.

His twin could only nod as he laughed. He took a breath and forced himself to calm down enough to ask, "Think they noticed yet that blasting 'em makes them multiply?"

"The Gremlins or the Whiz-Bangs?"

"Both"

"Doesn't look it. 'Dumbledoremlin' was a nice touch by the way, Fred."

"I think the Professor would have enjoyed it. But, I thought I was George today?"

"Nope, that's tomorrow. Come on, we need to get to the next place Harry needs us."

As the two wizards crept away unobserved one asked, "Are we sure daylight will destroy all of the Gremlins?"

"Pretty sure. That's how it worked in the film."

The first part of the plan had worked perfectly. Now it was time for the next step.

### Auror Headquarters 23.30

For the last hour, the second level of the Ministry of Magic was a mad house. The appearance of the weird creatures on Diagon Alley was pulling in many of the available resources the Ministry dispatchers had. Teams from the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures, the Oblivators, and the Accidental Magic Reversal Squad had been sent to back up the Aurors in the Alley. Half of the day shift Aurors had been pulled in to cover the patrols abandoned by the Aurors responding to the crisis in the Alley. The only Aurors left in the Ministry aside from the three dispatchers were the two Emergency Response Teams in their ready room.

The new Head Auror, Kingsley Shacklebolt, held back the two ready teams. "This could be an attempt to pull all of our forces into a trap or diversion. We have enough people in the Alley to deal with the creatures."

It was just on the hour when the Floo fires suddenly flared up as if air was suddenly rushing into the fire. The dispatchers all stepped back as the fire's light glared brighter.

Then suddenly, a burst of air surged out of the Floo as if a giant was blowing out a candle. The sudden gust blew out the Floo fires and filled the air with soot. The dispatchers and Kingsley started coughing and rubbing the soot from their eyes.

"What the hell was that?" Kingsley demanded. The senior dispatcher started to reply when a deep booming voice interrupted her.

"Oops, sorry. Anyone have a tissue?"

Kingsley and the dispatchers could only stare in surprise at the fireplace where the voice had come from. It would be another five minutes before they tried to restart the Floo fires and discover they could generate even a spark.

Kingsley's eyes grew wide as the significance hit him. He smacked down on the alert button, summoning the Emergency Response Teams.

"Get to the holding cells," he ordered the ERT leaders. "We can't call for help. The attack on the Alley has to be a distraction. Once you get there, access the situation and send back a report. Back up the guards and hold until I can get some more Aurors here to relieve you. Questions? Then get moving!"

Before the ERT squads had even cleared the area, Shacklebolt was already shouting orders to his dispatchers. "McVeigh, get to Madam Bones and tell her what happened. Then get to the Minister. Ross, check the other Floo connections in the Ministry. See if we are the only ones affected by this. Jones, you run down to Black Watch's offices and tell the shift supervisor to get his men positioned to defend the Ministry against attack."

The three dispatchers were looking at the Head Auror in shock and disbelief. "Let's move, people! Now!"

As they ran to follow his instructions, Shacklebolt cursed under his breath. He hoped it would be enough.

--BD--

Kingsley Shacklebolt looked out across the large Ministry cafeteria filled with battered and bruised Ministry workers. Aside from a few cases admitted to St. Mungos, the Ministry forces had not suffered any casualties. The odd creatures fought, harassed, and mocked the Aurors and the other forces sent to Diagon Alley. The situation was completely out of control until sunrise two hours ago.

The exhausted Ministry forces were shocked when the demonic little creatures exploded into green goo when the morning sun hit them. Pushing through their exhaustion, the Aurors searched all of the

wreckage that was the Alley to find any of the creatures hiding from the sun. After a two hour search, the Alley was declared safe.

Kingsley called the attention of the exhausted Aurors. "I'm going to make this real short. We will do a full debrief by shifts later. Second and third shift, go home and get some rest. Report at your normal times. First shift, you guys were called in last and should be the freshest of us."

Many of the first shift Aurors groaned at the news. A number of them had been in a favourite Auror pub last night when a wizard offered to buy the "Heroes of the Ministry" free rounds of Firewhiskey. The lot of them hadn't made it to their beds before getting called in, but none of them wanted to admit that to their boss.

Kingsley continued, "Obviously, last night's attack was the work of the Count. We have no idea of his purpose in destroying Diagon Alley, but we have to be careful of any follow-up attacks."

After dismissing the off shift personnel, the Head Auror sent half of the Aurors back to the Alley to oversee cleanup and assigned the rest to patrols and on-call response.

--BD--

The next emergency came just after noon. The head popped into the relit fireplace in the Auror Headquarters.

"We need help at Malfoy Manor immediately! We've been invaded!" The young, blonde haired man screaming out of the Floo looked to be in complete panic. "They are destroying my house!"

"Step back, sir," the dispatcher calmly replied. "An Auror team will step through in a moment."

A five-man Auror team stepping through the Floo thirty seconds later were met with a scene of absolute chaos.

A horde of small rodent-like creatures were swarming all over the once elegant Malfoy mansion.

"What the bloody hell?" the Auror leader asked in shock. After the whole previous day's shift, the extended Happy Hour at the pub, and the night's battle with the creatures in the Alley, the Auror leader was having a hard time processing what she was seeing with her own eyes.

It was a torn and bleeding Narcissa Malfoy that provided the answer to that question when she came screaming into the room followed by another swarm of the creatures.

"Stop them! They are trying to eat me!"

One of the Aurors, Michael Weston, quickly cast a charm the held the furry creatures back. A crying Narcissa Malfoy wrapped herself around the lead Auror. The Auror was not used to such a friendly welcome from this Malfoy. Or any Malfoy for that matter.

"Aunt Narcissa, what is going on here? Draco only screamed you were being invaded."

The crying witch wouldn't answer, but Auror Weston provided the answer.

"They are only nifflers, Tonks." The Auror was holding one of the rodents where it was calmly playing with a knut and making some odd purring noises. The Auror looked up at his pink haired team leader while fighting off a grin. "Someone let a whole bunch of nifflers into the manor."

"A bunch?" Tonks snorted. "It looks like every niffler in England is in this place." She looked around in amusement and dismay. "All the gold and silver on display in this place must be driving them nuts."

"They kept biting me," Narcissa stammered out. "I woke up and they were gnawing on my fingers and ears." Narcissa held up her right hand to show the bloody mess her fingers had become. Tonks noticed when she moved her head that she was missing a least one earlobe too as her aunt started to break down again.

Tonks nodded her approval when one of the other Aurors hit Narcissa with a Calming Charm. "Aunt Narcissa, where is Draco and Lucius?"



The now calmer witch answered, "Lucius is on business in France for the week. Draco is here somewhere. I don't know. I was trying to get away."

The conversation was cut short when three Black Watch units stormed out of the Floo in attack formation, wands out and ready for a fight. Tonks could feel their confusion where instead of the expected Dark Wizards there was only a massive horde of relatively harmless nifflers cheerfully disassembling Malfoy Manor.

The Black Watch leader took command and started ordering the Aurors and Watchmen to start corralling the rodents. He also called for teams from the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures to come in to assist in the round up.

When Tonks tripped over a fallen vase, Weston reached down to pull her back up before the nifflers swarmed her. As she stood up, Weston leant into his boss's ear and whispered. "I know who did this." He paused at Tonk's raised eyebrow. "It was the Potter twins. I was a year ahead of them at Hogwarts. Al is great with magical creatures. Once he let a Mooncalf loose in Thomas's dorm room. It smashed everything flat and then danced into my room next door."

Tonks snorted at the thought of her missing cousins. "You're right. This is something they would come up with."

"But if they are with the Count, then why this prank?" Weston asked curiously. "Why not an attack? We've seen the results of their attacks. And even if Narcissa is their aunt also, they had as little fondness for the Malfoys as the rest of the Potters."

Tonks considered this for a moment. "Something to think about," she agreed. "Get this mess cleaned up and then we can think about this. Merlin, I'm tired."

--BD--

Ministry of Magic

The three wizards stepped into the phone booth dressed in plain labourers' clothes. The shortest of the three picked up the phone and dialled 6-2-4-4-2. After a moment, a voice came from overhead.

"Welcome to the Ministry of Magic. State your business, please."

"Visit the Department of Magical Law Enforcement."

"Thank you." Three badges popped out of the slot on the phone as the booth quickly descended down into the depths of the Ministry.

The Ministry of Magic is an odd building. It has roughly ten levels going down into the ground. The bottom two levels consist of the former offices of the Department of Mysteries and the courtrooms of the DMLE. Black Watch had now taken over the former DoM spaces. The next level up, Level Eight, is the Visitor's Entrance and Atrium. The next five levels going up are the various bureaucratic department of the Ministry. Level Two houses Auror Headquarters and part of the Wizengamot. Level One, closest to the surface, housed the Minister's office, senior officials, and the Wizengamot's chambers.

The three wizards stepped casually from the phone booth into the bustling Atrium. The Atrium was filled with Ministry workers returning to their offices after having lunch in the Ministry cafeteria. The lifts going to the higher levels were filled as more and more witches and wizards finished up.

"Wands, please," Eric the security guard ordered them as they stepped out. The three wizards complied handing over a trio of old, well-used looking wands.

"Your business today?" he grunted while scanning the wands.

"Estimate on an office relocation for some guv'nor on the second floor," one of the workers answered." That matched with the construction and moving charms the wands had mostly cast.

"Take the lift to the Second level. Check in with the receptionist there." Eric handed back the wands.

“Cheers, mate,” one of the wizards commented as they took their wands and started away.

The three wizards joined the lines for the lifts without talking. Eric watched them a bit, until a mother with her three young, crying children appeared from the phone booth and he turned to face them. The three workers were quickly forgotten.

The ride of the lift to the DMLE offices was perfectly normal. The lift was crowded leaving the Atrium, but each stop saw fewer passengers moving up to the next floor. When the lift finally reached the Second level, only the three labourers and two attractive young secretaries from the Wizengamot offices remained. As the three wizards stepped out of the lift, the last one out turned and gave the two witches a smile and a wink as the lift doors closed causing the two to blush and giggle.

“Stop playing with the birds and concentrate on the job,” one labour wizard admonished the trailing wizard.

The scolded wizard shrugged. “The boss said to think of this whole thing as a prank. Pranks always make me a bit randy. ‘Sides, one of them was a ‘Puff a few years above us that I always rather fancied.” The other two wizards ignored him and walked over to the waiting receptionist.

The third wizard seemed to be searching his robe pockets for something and stopped just a few steps from the lift doors. When he saw his two friends blocking the receptionist’s view, he pulled out his real wand and cast a weak opening charm on the doors. The doors parted a handwidth before starting to close again. Before they closed, he threw three glass tubes through the opening. Then he casually walked over to rejoin his mates.

The receptionist was a bit flustered when the unnoticed third wizard joined his friends. “I’m sorry, but I don’t have any record of a work order for a relocation on this level,” she was saying whilst leafing through a stack of papers.

“Are you sure, ma’am. Our boss insisted the move had to be today. Right scary she was.” The shortest wizard said acting as

spokesperson. Almost against her will, the receptionist smiled back at the glowing green eyes of the young wizard's joke.

Further conversation ended when alarms started ringing all over the Ministry. Coming from nowhere, a voice boomed through the reception area.

"MAINTENCE TO THE ATRIUM! POSSIBLE BURST PIPES FLOODING LOWER LEVELS! ALL MAINTENCE TO THE ATRIUM!"

--BD--

Eric was sitting behind his desk having sent the witch and her loud brood up to the Floo Network Authority. The Atrium was even more crowded than before as the full mass of workers moved out of the cafeteria. Eric opened up his Muggle sports magazine to read the latest football scores during the lull at his desk.

His lull didn't last long.

The first shrieks started at the lift doors as water started to trickle up and out onto the floor. In seconds the trickle grew into a spray as water pressure forced more water out the crack between the doors.

Eric rushed over, his magazine forgotten. He tried a freezing charm but the water was coming with too much force now. The guard wondered what to do next.

That was when things went from bad to catastrophe in a single heartbeat.

The stairway door leading down to the courtrooms burst open as a flood of water slammed through the opening. The Atrium instantly started flooding. Within a minute, the water was already up to the wizard's ankles and showed no sign of slowing down.

Eric sloshed his way over to the security desk and waved his hand over the crystal ball, activating the Ministry-wide announcement system. He only hoped something could be done before the situation got any worse.

He hoped that everyone on the lower levels had been able to get their Bubble-Head Charms up quickly enough. But now that the water was up to his knees, he hoped it wasn't needed on this level too.

--BD--

The scene outside Auror Headquarters was one of panic. To cover for the exhausted and wounded Aurors, many of the Auror cadets were pressed into service filling in support positions. The reports from the lower levels were causing a fair amount of panic amongst the green LEOs.

The three labour wizards stood unnoticed off to the side. They just stayed out of the way. None of the Aurors noticed the short wizard shoot a glare at his companions when one of the Aurors shouted out a report that the Atrium was now completely submerged and level Seven was starting to flood.

At a signal from the short wizard, the three labours moved off towards a nearby bathroom.

--BD--

Harry led the Potter twins out of the loo. Their labourer robes had been shed revealing black pants and boots topped by black commando-style sweaters. All three wore charmed necklaces the obscured their identity like the Unspeakables' hoods. Harry had his matching Holly and Phoenix feather wands attached to each forearm. His trusty old Colt M1911A1 was riding in a shoulder holster. Al and Thomas wore bandoleers with small glass orbs attached across their chests.

It said something about the chaos around them that the threesome reached the entrance to the Ministry holding cells before they were challenged. Harry was happy to have made it that far without raising any alarm. That is when things went a bit wonky.

The guard on the door was taken out by a wandless stunner as Harry placed his hand on the wizard's shoulder. To anyone watching, the guard just seemed to fall asleep. Al kept watch and Thomas cast a

Notice-Me-Not charm as Harry quickly and efficiently searched the guard removing his wand and the jail keys.

Harry glanced at Al and said, "Mortis, watch the door. Hound, you're with me."

Harry was just stepping through the door to the cells when the sight of an approaching witch stopped him.

"What are you doing in here? What is your authorization?" she demanded.

'Oh bloody hell!' Harry swore to himself. Everyone else in the Ministry and we had to run into Hermione. Harry motioned behind his back for Thomas to stay back.

"I asked you a question," Hermione demanded. Harry noticed she was moving for her wand. Years of training and experience stepped in. Hermione's wand was clearing her robe pocket when Harry's hand smashed into the nerve cluster on the top of her hand.

The sudden, unexpected pain caused Hermione's hand to snap open, dropping her wand back into the pocket as she started to yell out. Harry grabbed her and pushed her up against the wall with his hand over her mouth.

"Stop it, Hermione," Harry growled quietly. "You don't know everything that is happening here. I don't want to hurt anyone. I'm only here to get part of my family back."

The young witch's brown eyes showed her fear as she realized the Count himself was holding her against the wall. Her research worked against her as thoughts of the deaths at this wizard's hands ran through her brain. Then her eyes started to harden with determination.

Harry recognized that look from seven years as best mates. "Sorry, Hermione. *Stupefy*." He gently lowered her unconscious body to the floor.

"Harry?" a voice called from a nearby cell. Harry ran over. Inside was a bruised and battered Tom Potter-Evans.

"Give me a moment, Tom, and I'll have you out of there." Harry unlocked the door and tossed the keys to Thomas. "Go find your Mum." Thomas nodded and started down the hall.

Harry stepped into the cell as Tom struggled to stand. He dropped back down with a groan. "Busted my ribs," Tom wheezed. "Black Watch wanted to know where you were hiding."

"Why not use Veritaserum?" Harry wondered aloud.

"They were more interested in hurting me than really trying to find out where you were," Tom grunted. Harry nodded. That made some sense but he'd have to think about it later.

"Tom, I am going to transfigure you into a chess piece. You are too hurt to walk out of here and we need to move quickly."

Tom grinned a bit through the pain. "As long as it's not a queen."

"Deal."

Harry stepped back a bit and quickly cast the spell. He snatched up the king piece and placed it into a pocket as he left the cell. Coming down the hall was Thomas, Bella and an unexpected guest. It was Christina.

"What the hell are you doing here?" a shocked Harry asked.

"Nice to see you too, Count. I heard you were back in action," the former Dark Witch answered with a twisted smile. "Black Watch ordered my arrest as a known former 'collaborator' of yours. Who knew what we did during the war counted as collaboration."

"That's why Hermione was here," Harry half asked.

"My granddaughter wasn't happy with my arrest, but it was a legal order. Hermione believes in rules. Too much like my sister for her own good."

"Where is my wand?" Bella interrupted. "I want the bastards to pay for this!" Harry recognized the expression on her face. It was the same one he'd seen on Bellatrix LeStrange's face two lifetimes ago.

"The Ministry still has it, but we are getting it back," Harry explained.

Harry glanced back to where Al was guarding the door. He turned back to the two witches. "We need to hurry. I'm going to transfigure you both. No, we don't have time to argue! Neither of you are in any kind of shape for a fight and our way out might kill you."

Christina grimaced as she realized the Count was right. "Fine, but bring Hermione too. Even if she won't join us there is too much danger of her getting hurt fighting us or hurting us." Harry quickly agreed. It was in line with his own thoughts anyway.

Harry cast the spells and quickly picked up the two queens and a rook and placed them in the pocket with the king piece. The two Unspeakables moved quickly through the jail and joined with Al.

Al made the 'all clear' signal as he heard the two Potters coming up behind him. Harry stopped just inside the jail and peered out into the Auror Headquarters. Things were a lot calmer and more Aurors had arrived. Harry counted about fifteen of them scurrying around. That wasn't good.

"They realized no one was drowning in the flooding," Al whispered back to them. The 'water' used to flood the Ministry was similar to the liquid Muggles used for deep dives. You could breathe the 'water' and be perfectly safe. At least once the panic of drowning had past. Getting the fluid out of your lungs once back in air wasn't a pleasant experience either.

"Okay, let's get out of here. Plan B. Mortis, toss your bandoleer out there." Harry handed Thomas the chess pieces and said, "No matter what, you get out of here."

Al pulled the bandoleer over his head and ended the protective magic on the orbs. Then with a quick motion, he arched it towards the centre of the room. The glass orbs shattered on impact creating a bright flash and a thunderous boom. White smoke started to fill the



room as the dazed Aurors close to the impact point staggered around holding their ears.

The Count, followed by Mortis and Hound started moving swiftly through the Auror Headquarters. They were halfway across the room when a team of ten arriving Aurors noticed them.

“Get out now,” Harry ordered them. Both wands dropped into his hands as he turned to face the Aurors. “I am the Count. I believe you gentlemen wished to have a word with me?”

That had the effect Harry wished as they paused for a split second in surprise.

“*Quasso!*”

The Concussion Curse exploded on the floor in front of the Auror squad. It hurled the oncoming Aurors aside. Then the spells started coming in from the Aurors that had been further back and retained their footing.

Harry was purely defensive. There were too many spells coming from different directions . He only needed to but the twins a few minutes. Harry knew he could hold off this amount of magical energy for long. So he did the only thing he could.

He attacked.

To the stunned Aurors surprise, the Dark Count suddenly moved in amongst them. His shields prevented them from physically piling on him, but many could not cast more than Stunning Spells in fear of hitting their fellow Aurors.

Harry didn't have the same restriction. The Count flowed through the Aurors, thwarting their best attempts to stop him. He kept away from the spells that would be instantly deadly, but he cast Bone-Breaking Hexes, Reductos and similar spells at will. The Count aimed for the arms and legs for the most part, however the treatment of his family didn't make him feel too forgiving just now.

The two minutes of the fight had lasted what seemed hours as Harry suddenly moved towards the door. At least fifteen Aurors were down with various injuries as Harry ran out of the room with twice that number starting in pursuit.

Harry burst through the magical curtain that hid the Ministry of Magic from the Muggle world. Several unconscious bodies strewn about the floor here told Harry the twins had not had an easy walk out. Harry paused only long enough to cast a Locking Charm on the door. It wouldn't slow the Aurors for too long, but every bit helped. Harry ran out of the shop.

From the Muggle street, the Ministry's Auror entrance appeared to be an abandoned chemist. A number of parked cars and lorries lined the street in either direction. The twins were waiting for him with brooms in hand. Harry cast a revealing charm on a parking meter to reveal his own broom.

"You cast the wards?" Harry asked. He could feel the anti-travel wards that came up when Eric the Security Wizard activated the Ministry alarms down in the Atrium. Tom had added the wards whilst Minister of Magic. They prevented all Portkey and Apparition travel within two kilometres of the Ministry.

"All set," Al answered.

"Then let's fly."

The three former Seekers took to their brooms at maximum speed straight through the heart of London in broad daylight.

--BD--

The first Aurors reached the sidewalk in time to see the three broomriding Dark Wizards turn between two buildings at the end of the street. They were shocked that even Dark Wizards would act so blatantly in front of Muggles.

Kinglsey Shacklebolt arrived in the second wave of Aurors. He was quickly briefed. "There are some brooms in Headquarters. Grab them and get moving!"

Less than ten seconds later, five Aurors took off in pursuit. The Count and his followers had a twenty-second head start on them.

The rest of the Aurors cleared the sidewalk to return to the mess in the Ministry. One figure was left standing on the walk alone.

He had arrived just as all hell broke loose and witnessed the entire fight. The wizard wasn't sure of everything that was going on but he was sure of one thing. That really was the Count. Few wizards were willing to carry Muggle weapons of any kind. If they did, it was a sword or a dagger, not a pistol. However, the proof was the fight with the Aurors. No one else fought with that same casual, yet ruthless style.

The retired Auror turned and made his way back into the building. The Count was back and Alistor Moody really didn't have a clue what it really meant. And why leave on brooms?

--BD--

Harry was having a blast. The mission was a success. The diversions had been a complete success and now they just needed to keep the Aurors busy.

Flying, in any form, was always a favourite. Even that time he had jumped out of an aeroplane over Italy was a fond memory.

Banking though the artificial canyons of downtown London was going to be joining that list. Even with the post-fight stress, this was a lot of fun. The three wizards were flying high enough to clear the tops of the buses by about four metres.

Harry risked a glance back and noticed the pursuing Aurors. They were too far back to have a chance of catching the three Potters, but they were pushing their brooms for everything they had.

"Time to split up," Harry yelled. "On the count of three. One, two, three, break!"

The twins banked hard to the right at the intersection. Harry dropped lower and banked left around a large, red double-decker tourist bus.

The bus blocked Harry from sight as he made the turn the highlighted the manoeuvrability of a top Seeker.

Thirty metres down the street, Harry braked suddenly and turned down a side alley between two large office buildings. He started gaining altitude pulling into a ballistic trajectory up and over the building, setting course to follow the twins.

Up ahead, Harry could see the Aurors straining to catch up to the twins. If the two Potters had been pushing their brooms, the Aurors would have never had a chance. However, that wouldn't have been according to the plan.

Harry trailed after the Aurors and rapidly closed up the distance. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a small metal orb. Concentrating on the rear-most Auror, Harry muttered, "Target." The orb rose to fly alongside Harry. Harry repeated the process, pulling out four more orbs and concentrating on the other Aurors. Finally, surrounded by five floating orbs, Harry grinned, "Get'em guys!"

The orbs shot away from Harry. As they moved away, they grew to the size of normal Bludgers. Harry snickered. "Thanks, Dobby"

The five Bludgers ripped into the Aurors' formation. The trailing Auror took a blow to the back before they knew they were under attack. The sudden blow flung him from his broom and to the street below. His shout of surprise and pain was all the warning his fellow Aurors would get.

Three of the Aurors played Quidditch at Hogwarts so they knew exactly what they were facing. Or at least they thought they did. The group scattered to avoid the oncoming Bludgers in a standard evasive technique. Unfortunately, these were not normal Bludgers.

The Bludgers locked onto their targets doing an excellent imitation of a Muggle smart missile.

Chaos ensued as the Aurors vainly sought to avoid their mindless attackers. Three of them were knocked from their brooms before a former Beater managed to hit one with a Reducto. The Auror tried to

assist his fellow Auror but the Bludger caught her before he could get a clear shot at it.

The Auror watched in shock as his partner hurled off her broom towards the street thirty metres below. He was too far to help and all he could do was watch as he flew desperately towards her. He only vaguely noticed that the Bludger had popped like a soap bubble after hitting its target.

His shock was complete when she suddenly disappeared just before hitting the road pavement.

--BD--

“So, after they got to the street, Thomas handed the chess pieces off to Jimmy who was waiting with a normal Muggle cab. Then we just had to distract the Ministry long enough for him to get out of the travel tracking charms that surround the Ministry,” Harry explained.

“I can’t believe you used brooms in full view of all of Muggle London!” Tom yelled at his father two mornings later.

Katie had restored the chess pieces on their arrival. Together with Fleur, Katie worked on healing their injuries. Tom had slept for two days while his body healed. Bella and Christina were out of the infirmary the morning after their arrival. Bella was given a series of Calming Potions to help her deal with the death of her husband and the events of her imprisonment.

Al and Thomas had just finished telling Tom the whole story of the jailbreak.

“Relax, Tom,” Harry tried to reassure his son. “Do you really think I would expose the Wizarding world like that? Here, read this.” Harry tossed a copy of the London Times onto Tom’s lap.

Tom read the headline.

***Endor in London!***

***Officials were baffled how several people appeared to fly through the streets of downtown London while dressed from a scene of the movie Star Wars: Return of the Jedi. All of the witnesses reported three of the men were dressed in as Rebels whilst being pursued by others dressed as Imperial Storm Troopers.***

***A spokesman for LucasFilm Ltd. denied reports that it was part of a publicity stunt for the recently released Star Wars Episode I that will be premiering in London next month.***

***One executive at Industrial Lights and Magic, Lucas's special effects house, commented, "I wish I knew how they did that. It would take real magic to pull that off real time in the middle of the day!"***

"We had a modified illusion ward outside the Auror entrance," Harry explained. "Anyone taking flight would appear as a rebel or Storm Trooper to Muggles for five hours. See no one knows about magic."

"What about the ones knocked off their brooms?"

"The Bludgers were also delayed Portkeys. Once the Auror was within three metres of the ground, they pulled to a safe landing place." Harry smirked at the look on his son's face. "What? I didn't want to kill them."

"Where did you drop them?"

"The middle of Hogwarts Lake," Luna answered as she breezed into the room.

Tom snickered. His father would never grow up.

"Harry, it is time for you to leave now. The snortwarts said so."

"Leave?" Tom asked. "Where are you going?"

Luna smiled vaguely, "On his next great adventure, of course!"

"What?!" a concerned former (sort of) Dark Lord protested.

Luna nodded while Harry smothered a grin. He had really missed Luna.

### ***Missing Chapter 1 Scene***

***Many reviewers have asked what happened to Wormtail. The scene below takes place shortly after Harry's return but before he left on his vacation.***

#### Potter Manor

The three Marauders were joined by Harry and Tom in the study in Potter Manor after the dinner to welcome Harry back. The dinner was a repeat of the reunion at Hogwarts except now it was a bit more relaxed.

"So, I know about Fred and George having competition from Ron's twins, but were the Marauders trouble makers again here?" Harry asked.

"Probably worse," James admitted with a snicker. "Dad told me about your stories before I left for Hogwarts. He wanted to make sure I didn't cross certain lines," he admitted with a faint flush.

"James told me about it on the Express," Sirius grinned. "We had a reputation to live up to."

"Or down to," Remus commented with a mock frown.

"That too," the unrepentant dog animagus happily admitted.

"I had pranks planned before I even climbed on Platform 9 3/4," James added. Then he cringed slightly. "The first person caught by one of them was Lily. Caused her eyebrows to fall out before we even got to school. She wouldn't even talk civilly to me until Second year!"

Harry stared at his 'father' in disbelief before he started laughing and holding his ribs. Tom and the other two Marauders grinned at Harry's reaction and James's embarrassment.

“Sure, go ahead and laugh,” James sulked with a grin twitching on his lips. “Mum and Dad enjoyed it too. They never told me whom I married in the other timeline until my wedding day. They just laughed through my seven years at Hogwarts.”

“That sounds like Tom and Elizabeth,” Harry wheezed as he struggled to get his breath. He nodded his thanks when Remus handed him a glass of water.

Once Harry had regained control of himself, he looked curiously at James. “What happened to Peter?”

Now James sighed. “Nothing really. It was an unintended side effect of Dad telling me stories trying to warn me about my behaviour and what your life was like. He never told me then about Peter’s role, but I knew he’d been a Marauder. I knew one of my friends would betray me.” James pointed at the now quiet Sirius and Remus. “And Dad told me about these two gits helping you out. So, I figured out the person to turn on me was Peter.

“I was an eleven year-old boy. I never did anything to Peter but I also didn’t try to be friends with him. He mostly hung out with some boys in Ravenclaw. Considering my uncle was also the Dark Lord that killed me in the old timeline and I was okay with that, it didn’t make sense to blame this Peter, but I guess I did.”

“You were only a kid,” Remus reminded him. “At least you grew up, unlike this big child next to me.”

“Oi!” Sirius protested. “I am not big!”

James ignored the byplay. “Last I’d heard, he was working for the Beast, Being, and Spirit Divisions of Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures.



## Chapter 13 - Blackbeard's Voyage

27 June 1999

The scene in front of Harry was as humorous as it was irritating.

Once Tom, Bella, and Christina were restored and healed from their time as the Ministry's 'guests', it was Hermione's turn to be returned to her normal form. Her chess piece was placed into the centre of a room specifically prepared for Hermione. It was comfortable and stocked with a bookcase filled with a number of books and scrolls. According to Ron, the comfortable room looked like a smaller version of Hermione's room when she was Hogwarts's Headgirl.

The room's comfort did nothing to inhibit the security placed on the room. Harry had too much respect for Hermione's magical or mental gifts to place her under anything but the most secure restrictions possible. From a certain point of view, it really was a compliment.

Hermione's rook was placed in the centre of the room with only Harry and Christina present. Harry tapped the rook with his wand and stepped back as the transfiguration reversed itself. Hermione lay on the floor wearing her DMLE robes. Her wand was safely secured in Harry's room.

"Did you have to stun her too?" Christina asked in an irritated tone.

"Actually, yes," Harry replied with a grin. "Even putting her into a Full-Body Bind or tied up with magical ropes wouldn't have been secure enough. I knew her too well in my first time line. Would you have simply tied me up?"

The unhappy former Dark Witch frowned briefly before casting the spell to wake up her sleeping granddaughter.

A second after the spell hit her, Hermione groaned and started to force herself to sit up. "Did we catch him?" she mumbled. "Why am I so groggy?"

"You were transfigured into a chess piece for a day after being stunned first," Harry commented with a slow smile. Christina started forward to help her granddaughter but Harry stopped her with a growled, "Remember our agreement."

The first face Hermione focused on was Christina. "Grandma? Where are we? What happened?"

"The Count came for me and the others. I asked him to bring you with us, dear. I couldn't take the chance of your getting hurt against us."

Hermione looked up at her grandmother with a hint of fear and panic in her eyes. "I've been captured by the Dark Count?" she asked in a whispered voice. "You really did join a new Dark Lord?"

Harry had enough. He stepped out from around Christina and into Hermione's view. "I am not a Dark Lord. I've fought two of them so far and now we have a third one running around here somewhere."

Hermione shrunk back when she first recognized Harry but quickly rallied. "I have seen the evidence! You are the same man that was known as the Count against Grindelwald! You would have to be at least ninety by now. Only Dark magic could have kept you looking so young!"

"Actually I was born on 31 July 1980," Harry commented, "but I admit I am the Count that fought Grindelwald. That is how I knew your grand mum."

Hermione looked confused by Harry's statement. "Time travel," he provided. "I travelled from the year 2000 back to 1934 in order to stop something from happening. One of the effects of the spell was I was forced to spend about ten years in the past before getting pulled back to the time I left from. You saw me return at the Quidditch pitch at Hogwarts."

Hermione was staring at Harry in disbelief. After a moment, she protested, "It is impossible to travel forward in time!"

Harry shrugged, "Using a Time Turner, yes. But the spell we used tethered me to this time. When the spell expired it snapped me back here. It also kept me from aging while I was in the past."

"It's true, Hermione," Christina added in a pleading voice. "The Count placed his memories of his previous timeline into a Pensieve for you to see for yourself." Harry's former nemesis really wanted her granddaughter to understand and support them. Hermione wasn't having any of it.

"You think you can trick me like you did my grandmother? I've seen the evidence of who you are and the attacks your followers have made!"

Harry was losing his patience. "Oh, for Merlin's sake, just watch the bloody memories, Hermione!" Hermione shrunk back at Harry's eruption. Harry didn't notice as he continued on. "If you don't read it in a bloody book, you never believe what is right in front of you! You're even worse now than you were before."

"My brother, Ron and Ginny all want you to join us. Just look at the memories and listen to what they have to say. If you don't believe us then fine; you can stay here in this room until we figure out who is behind all of this and take them out. I give you my word you won't be harmed as long as you stay in this room."

Hermione worked up her Gryffindor courage to ask, "And if I don't stay?"

Harry gave her a small grin. "Can you see a way out?"

After looking around the room carefully, Hermione shook her head no.

Christina gave Harry a frustrated look. "Harry put the door under a Fidelius Charm and he's the Secret Keeper." Hermione looked surprised by her grandmother's announcement.

Harry shrugged. "I can't have you getting loose if you are against us."

"So, I am a prisoner here unless I join you?"

"No," the blunt answer came to the witch's surprise. Harry shrugged at the look on her face. "Would I prefer to have you actively join us? Yes. But if not, then your Unbreakable Vow not to try to leave this location without explicit permission or hinder our activities would allow me to give you free run of our safe house."

Hermione looked a bit confused. "Why are you doing this?"

"Aside from your grandmother, Jimmy and Ron begging me to? Because I still have very fond memories of a young, bushy-haired, big-toothed young witch I met on the Hogwarts Express that became my best friend and stood by me no matter what. I owe it to her to give you this chance."

Hermione still looked a bit scared, but intrigued at the same time. Harry suppressed a sudden smile. Hermione never could resist knowing. He should have put the memories into a book and told her she wasn't allowed to read it. She would have fought to get a glance in them.

Hermione slowly moved over to the stone bowl. She paused at the table to glance nervously back at Christina. Christina nodded her encouragement. The younger witch visibly marshalled her courage before plunging into the memories contained in the bowl.

--BD--

It was over an hour later when Hermione stepped back from the bowl. She glanced around to see Harry and Christina sitting nearby drinking tea. Neither spoke as Hermione uncertainly walked over to join them. The shaken witch slid into an empty chair next to Christina. The two older magic-users waited for her to speak first.

Hermione gratefully accepted a cup of tea Christina poured for her. She took a long drink before speaking. Her voice soft, Hermione started to talk. "Memories can be faked, altered before putting them into a Pensieve,"

"True," Harry agreed thinking of Slughorn.

Hermione kept talking like Harry hadn't spoken. "But not that many or in such detail. I looked for the signs of modification. I couldn't find any. You really were at Hogwarts with 'me'. And our Luna really does remember you. How?"

Harry couldn't help the snicker that escaped. "Luna is Luna. I love the girl dearly but trying to follow her thinking is a good way to give yourself a headache."

"I never had any real friends until I got to Hogwarts," Hermione commented in a thoughtful voice. "When I got here it was a bit hard but first Ron and then the next year Jimmy and Ginny were my friends." Hermione looked at Harry in a bit of shock. "It was because of you, wasn't it?"

Harry shrugged. "Indirectly, I suppose. The Potter family all knew the stories to a greater or lesser extent. My children decided not to tell the whole story to their children until after they had left school. The younger family heard parts of the story. Jimmy and Sally knew about my time at Hogwarts and who my friends were. Ron didn't know anything though."

"Ron admitted to me that Al and Thomas pulled him aside in your First year and told him to give you a chance," Christina provided. Hermione looked a bit shocked at that news. So was Harry to a lesser extent. Christina smiled and added, "The twins told me they felt it was a matter of family honour to help out everyone that stood by Harry in the last timeline. So, all of your old defence group and your closest friends got their protection. As Harry's best friend and almost sister, you got their special support."

Hermione looked ashamed of herself. She had always known the Potters looked after her as one of their own. Now she felt like she had betrayed them.

She looked up at Harry but couldn't meet his eyes. "When you arrived, I knew something was off in the way they greeted you. There was too much that they knew about you. The story of going away as a child was not right. The Potters are too close for that story to be true. None

of you would admit the truth. What the Ministry showed me seemed to fill in the holes, I believed them. I lost my boyfriend and my friends because I had to know what was wrong with your story.”

Harry suppressed a chuckle. “It is okay, Hermione. I should have known that you would react to a mystery by charging off to solve it. Merlin knows I saw it enough first hand all through school. We should have taken you into our confidences early on, but we never expected the Ministry to turn on us like it did.”

Hermione flushed at the humour she heard in Harry’s voice. “How did you become the Count?”

“Too many Gryffindor genes I guess. I went back to change time to save my friends. The plan was to kill the proto-Voldemort and live quietly for ten years until I could come back. But as I was once told, I have a ‘people saving thing’.” Now Hermione looked really embarrassed as she had seen that memory in the Pensieve. It didn’t help that Harry was grinning at her.

“Do you know who the Dark Lord is then?” Hermione asked. “Someone attacked the Express and all of those other people.”

“Crouch Jr. is a leading candidate because we know he was a devoted and capable Death Eater before. I had some doubts about Crouch Sr. too before someone used Remus to assassinate him.” Harry gave her a questioning look. “Maybe you can help us look into that while I’m away. After all, in any timeline you are the brightest witch of your generation.”

Hermione ignored the compliment to latch onto what Harry said. “You are going away?”

“Michele was bitten in the attack on the Express. Her Veela genes are fighting the lycanthropy and it is killing her. Her Healer said something from her mother’s side is helping to fight it but until we know what it is we don’t know if it will really help her or not. Her Healer and I are taking her to try to find out.”

Hermione looked blankly at Harry for a moment before her eyes widened. "Michele is your great-granddaughter! The Potter twins are your grandsons!"

Harry smiled at how she put it together. "Now, I think there are some people outside that are rather anxious to see you." Hermione looked nervous at that news as she realized just who it would probably be. "Now, I just need your Vow and we can let them in."

Hermione looked a bit surprised by Harry's comment about the Unbreakable Vow. "I said I would help you. Is that really necessary?"

Harry looked a bit saddened but determined. "Unfortunately, yes. If it was just me, I would take your word. But it is my family too. The Muggles have a saying, 'Trust but verify'. It's a bit Slytherin but when they really are out to get you, it's not paranoia."

--BD--

25 June 1999 – Baltimore-Washington International Airport

Harry stood in the line patiently waiting for his 'family's' turn to go through U.S Customs. With his long experience in Germany during the war, Harry shouldn't have been nervous at all. This was an easy entry into a friendly nation, not a combat drop.

But he was.

The Count never tried to sneak into a country with a Veela Healer and his great-granddaughter. That was enough to make the experienced wizard very nervous. However, their cover should allow for that. The three travellers were posing as a couple taking their young daughter on holiday to the United States. Michele's appearance, mostly through dress, was made to appear a couple years younger, while Harry and Fleur were dressed to add ten years to their appearances. The nervousness and excitement in the two witches would be easy for officials to take purely as excitement visiting a new place.

Harry snorted quietly in amusement. The best thing about the cover was it was probably mostly true.

Sirius was able to get a set of completely legitimate blank passports via a Muggleborn schoolmate that now worked for the Home Office. Using Harry's authentic passport as a template, James and Sirius were able to duplicate the correct typing and stamps into the blanks. In some ways, sneaking out to have the photos taken was the hardest part.

Because Harry was sure all of the British airports would be under heavy DMLE scrutiny, he decided on an indirect route out of the country. They started their journey via Portkey to Glasgow. The Scottish city had a large enough Magical population that the Portkey wouldn't be noticed with all the other activity in the area. There Harry hired a car with room for the three of them with their luggage. Michele was particularly excited about being out for the first time since the attack on the Hogwarts Express.

Harry drove them along A77 down the Scottish coast of the Irish Sea to the small town of Cairryan. From there, Harry paid 140 pounds for a ferry to take them with their hire car to the town of Larne on the Irish coast. Harry felt particularly vulnerable crossing the water with nowhere to run if things went pear shaped. But the winds were favourable and the seas calm for a pleasant crossing.

Although Northern Ireland was under the Muggle government of the United Kingdom, the Irish Ministry of Magic controlled the whole of Ireland. An ancient treaty between the druids of Britain and Ireland forbade magical participation in Muggle attacks. The treaty was continued under Roman domination of England straight through to the present Ministries of Magic so the island was never divided in the magical world. It was only Irish wizards living in England, Scotland or Wales that attended Hogwarts as Seamus had. The Irish Ministry maintained a rather smaller school for its home-grown wizards and witches.

Once ashore, they drove south through Northern Ireland past Belfast and across the border into Ireland. Crossing the border provided the first test of their passports. With the Troubles in Northern Ireland, the



guards on both sides of the border took a good look at them. Harry wasn't sure of the extra attention paid to them because of Fleur's aura was a good thing or not. Whilst they would definitely not remember what he looked like, it was guaranteed they would remember Fleur!

They turned in their car and spent the night in a Dublin hotel room near the airport. The next morning they boarded an Air Canada flight that flew to Toronto. There they changed planes for the flight to Washington. Including delays and the layover, it took almost twenty hours to reach Baltimore. Now all they had to do was get through Customs.

Finally, it was Harry's turn at the window. With an expression of impatience that was completely real, Harry placed their passports onto the counter.

"Nature of your visit, Mr. Teach?" The bored looking woman inside the booth barely seemed to look up at Harry.

"Holiday. Bringing my wife and daughter to see the States."

The agent glanced at the passports and then gave Harry and Fleur a passing glance. But when the woman saw Michele, she actually smiled. "Well, aren't you just the cutest thing!"

Michele smiled in that cute, innocent way she'd perfected for getting what she wanted. "Thank you, ma'am. I'm Anne." Harry suppressed a chuckle as his great-granddaughter turned on a charm that had nothing to do with her Veela genes. She happily chatted with the suddenly smiling Customs agent while the woman stamped off on their passports with hardly a second glance.

When she was finished, the agent handed Harry the passports back and grinned, "God bless you when this one starts dating. She's gonna have all the boys in a tizzy, that one. And she knows it."

Harry smiled, "She has practiced on her grandfather and me for quite a while now."

"I'll bet she has. Next!" With that the agent turned to the next impatient traveller, Harry and company seemingly already forgotten.

Taking the bags, the 'Teach' family made their way down the concourse. Once they were safely away from the Customs agents, Fleur leant into Harry and said, "That is the last time we allow your godfather to choose ze names."

"I like my name," 'Anne' chimed in.

"It was his idea of a joke," Harry explained. "I didn't see the papers until after he and James were finished. So, I got Edward Teach with my French-born wife Jacquotte Delahaye and our daughter Anne."

"Yez, and I will have 'im walk ze plank," the French witch scoffed under her breath.

Harry suppressed his grin and decided against further comment. After twenty hours of travel, Fleur was out of patience and more than a little grumpy. It was a feeling Harry could completely agree with. Besides, Harry pointed out hours ago that at least Sirius found her a French alias.

--BD--

Harry woke the next morning in a bed in a Marriot Courtyard hotel located just outside the Washington beltway. He could already hear the sounds of the crazy American commuters making their way into work on the not-too distant highway. Harry was not the most experienced driver and getting to the hotel when tired and driving on the wrong side of the road was more nerve wracking than many of his magical fights.

Fortunately, getting checked into their rooms had been quick. The hotel catered to business travellers and had small suites with two bedrooms, a small kitchenette and a bathroom. Harry and Fleur gratefully crashed in the bedrooms. Michele was asleep on the couch in the common room before Harry even got the bags into the room.

Harry glanced out at the digital clock next to his bed. The red numbers announced it was 7.30. Harry could only groan. If Azkaban ever closed down, putting the inmates in Muggle airplanes in coach seats for twenty hours would make a great alternate to Dementors.

Add a crying baby in the row behind them would make it even worse.

Michele easily bounced off the couch in excitement of seeing Washington DC. Fleur was a bit trickier as she threw a fireball at Harry's head when he opened her door to wake her up. All he could see was the top of her head and a long, toned leg sticking out from under the covers. Harry tried to ignore the leg and called Fleur's name. After repeating her name three times, a similarly toned arm came out from the covers to hurl a small fireball at the door.

Harry hastily pulled his head back whilst Michele giggled behind him. At her great-grandfather's look Michele helpfully said, "Fleur's not much of a morning person."

"Thanks for the warning."

Michele's smile proclaimed that butter wouldn't melt in it. "What kind of prankster would I be I didn't let you find out for yourself?"

Harry fought an answering grin as he struggled to maintain his glare at the twelve year-old Marauder-in-training.

"Make some coffee and crack her door a little," Michele whispered like she was confiding a great secret. "Gabby told me this was the only way to wake her sister safely."

"That's good to know," Harry admitted with a smile. "Go take your shower and I'll get breakfast ready. We should have time to walk around Washington before our meeting at Gringotts."

Michele grabbed her bag with a happy shout and scurried into the bathroom. Harry snorted in amusement at her energy level. The potions masked the symptoms so well he could almost forget how seriously ill she really was.

Almost.

--BD--

“Mon dieu! Is it always so hot and sticky here?”

It was shortly before noon and Harry, Fleur and Michele were walking along the Washington Mall away from the Washington Monument. Michele insisted they climb the steps to the top first thing. Harry admitted it was an impressive view. The White House was directly ahead of them and the Department of Commerce building was on their right. The sun was bright in a cloudless sky but the thick humidity made the heat even worse.

“Washington DC was considered a ‘hazardous duty station’ for the army when it was being built. I read about it on the plane,” Michele chirped out as she happily strolled along. The heat didn’t seem to bother her one bit. Her next comment explained it. “This reminds me of when Daddy and I lived in Bombay before we came back for school.”

Michele’s face dropped at that reminder. Harry noticed and asked, “Was it dangerous because of all the politicians?”

Michele rallied to smile and laugh at Harry’s question. “No! It was the mosquitoes and malaria. The city was built on a filled in swamp.”

“According to my father, it still is a swamp,” Fleur commented dryly, but her cheeks dimpled slightly in humour.

“Well, it was originally designed by a Frenchman,” Michele grinned.

Fleur made a mock attempt to slap Michele with the paper she had been fanning herself with as she laughed, “You little scamp!” Michele giggled as she easily dodged the papers.

“Where are we going, ‘Daddy’? Michele asked Harry.

“The building to the right of the White House is the US Department of Treasury. Gringotts is under the building on the right of that.”

“Why is it so close to the White House?” Fleur asked.

Harry smiled at that. “It’s not really. It is close to the Treasury building if you get the difference. I was told that the third US President, Thomas Jefferson was a wizard. He created the Department of Magic and placed it here. When Gringotts opened their main branch in New York City twenty years later, they also opened a small office here to deal with the government.”

“Where is the Department of Magic?” Michele asked curiously.

“Someone with an odd sense of humour placed it in the same building as the Department of Energy.” Harry turned and pointed back the way they had come. “It is back along the Mall behind their Smithsonian Museum.”

A couple of minutes later the trio stood in the shadow of the Willard Hotel building. Harry led them past the grand hotel entrance to a glass door simply marked ‘Administrative Offices’. Harry could vaguely feel the magic of the Muggle-Repealing Wards as he stepped through the doorway.

A small, well-dressed black wizard was waiting for them just inside the entrance. “Ah, Mr. Teach and company I presume? Come this way.”

Before Harry could say anything, the unidentified man led them further into the building. After sharing a quick warning glance with Fleur, Harry loosened his wand in its sleeve sheath and followed him, Michele behind him and Fleur bringing up the rear.

The man led them to a lift entrance and stood aside for them to precede him before stepping in also. The man stepped in and turned sharply towards the doors as the lift started to descend. Without warning he suddenly said, “I worked with Mr. Potter-Evans quite often and found him to be most efficient and effective in his dealings. I think I shall miss that competence.”

Harry had just worked out the man was speaking about Jonas when the doors popped open and the man stepped out. "Come along," he called back.

The trio stepped into a large lobby area that looked more like a Muggle Fortune 500 company than a goblin-run bank, vastly different than Gringotts London branch. A few goblins tellers were visible at the end of the room dealing with local customers. Of the humans filling the lobby, few wore the traditional robes of witches and wizards. Most were dressed identically to their Muggle counterparts working on the streets above.

They followed the small man through the lobby towards a pair of large expensive looking wooden doors. The doors opened automatically as the man approached. Past the doors, Harry could see a plush lounge with only a few men waiting. One man was sitting in a chair with a drink in his hand while two other men stood nearby. Beyond them were a series of office doors, all of them closed.

"This way, Mr. Teach. Bihtok is waiting for you," their escort called back to them.

Harry noticed the seated wizard looked up at their escort's comment. A furious expression crossed his face as he forced himself to his feet. In a few steps he intercepted Harry's group.

"What is the meaning of this, Collins?" the wizard demanded. Harry noted the man was wearing a very expensive looking suit and had wavy brown hair. The other two wizards moved into flanking positions behind the man. Something in their manner gave Harry a flashback to Draco Malfoy and his pair of bookends. Aside from the hair and the accent, he could be a Malfoy.

"Councillor Travis," the guide identified as Collins greeted the well-groomed wizard dryly.

"I have been kept waiting here for fifteen minutes, Collins," Senator Travis growled. "I must speak with Bihtok immediately, but have been kept waiting here because he has a more important meeting!" The

way he said it, it was obvious he could not see where anything could be more important than his business.

Councillor Travis turned his attention to the 'Teaches'. "Who is this?" he sneered.

"Mr. Teach is from our European negotiations department. He is here on bank business. His wife and daughter have accompanied him on his trip," Collins answered in his flat tone.

A disgusted expression crossed Travis's face. "Bad enough to have to deal with our own Twigs here, now you have to bring one of these damn Pureblood Twigs here!"

"Actually, I'm a Half-blood," Harry helpfully provided in an innocent tone. This earned him another glare.

"Bihtok will be with you momentarily, Councillor," Collins assured the irate politician. "Mr. Teach's business will not take long and then you may conduct your business. Delaying his business also delays yours and wastes the bank's Galleons. For now, excuse us."

The Councillor stepped aside reluctantly to allow them to pass. Without another word, Collins led the small party forward and through the centre office door. On the other side was a lavishly adorned office. Once they were through it, Michele piped up.

"Excuse me, what did that man mean by calling my father a 'Twig'?"

Collins glanced briefly over his shoulder. "A Twig is a derogatory term for a wizard with a low amount of magical ability. A Squib can serve as a link between the magical and Muggle worlds, five of the last ten Presidents have been Squibs. A Twig is seen as worthless in either world."

Michele looked confused. "But why?"

Harry answered, "You know how some wizards back home focus on blood? Well, American wizards focus on magical power. To them, it is more important to be powerful than come from a line of pure wizards.

It is not uncommon for older wizards from powerful families to adopt powerful Muggleborns into the family.”

“You’ve travelled here before,” Collins observed. “Please take a seat.” He indicated a small couch and chairs set by the fireplace.

“Briefly, on vacation,” Harry admitted as they sat down. “I ran into a couple of your less stellar examples trying to prove themselves by challenging foreigners that they assume will be weaker than they are.”

“Councillor Travis leads a powerful coalition within the American Wizards Council that I guess you could call the Power wing. They want to establish a higher bar for the required level of magical power to attend our higher level magical academies. They feel it is a waste of time training witches and wizards without the magical power to back it up.”

Fleur looked shocked. “But what about subjects like Potions, Runes and Arthimancy where a witch’s total power is not important?” Harry could tell she was upset by the amount of French accent that leaked into her question.

Collins shrugged, “They don’t care. It is much like the European emphasis on bloodline over power. There a Pureblood of low power may get training in Transfiguration or Charms that he doesn’t have the raw power to back up while a magically powerful Muggle-born is blocked out.”

“It is still wrong,” Fleur insisted. As a half-breed, Harry knew Fleur had dealt with bigots all her life. While not nearly as bad as werewolves or half-giants, Veela still dealt with wizards that only saw them as pleasure objects.

“Most of American magical society would agree with you,” Collins answered. “All societies have their idiots.”

“Hah!” a rough voice interrupted. “And human societies have more than most!” Collins stood as an older goblin entered through a side door. Harry and the others followed his example.



“Mr. Harry Potter, may I introduce Bihtok, general manager of Gringotts, North America. Manager Bihtok, this is Harry Potter, Healer Fleur Delacour and Michele Potter-Evans.” Harry suppressed the surprise from showing on his face that Collins knew exactly who they were.

Apparently, he didn't do it well enough as the older goblin smiled at him, revealing his wickedly sharp teeth.

“Relax, Mr. Potter. We knew who you were the moment you stepped into Gringotts halls,” Bihtok assured him with a smirking grin. “Our wards wouldn't be very good if they didn't tell us who was really at the door.”

Harry forced himself to relax. “I assume you will be discrete about our presence.” It wasn't a question.

Bihtok waved Harry's comment away. “The Potter Clan, and its associates, is one of the largest depositors in our European division. You've been good for business. We goblins may cheerfully slit throats in competition but what is happening in England is not good for business. Profits are already down 17 percent since this mess started.

“Mr. Potter-Evans, like Mr. Collins here, was one of the few humans we truly trusted. He was a shrewd negotiator with a spine to 'em. He was one of ours and we owe it to him to help out young Ms. Potter-Evans here.” Bihtok nodded at the wide-eyed Michele. “Goblins don't like owing anybody, so this will make us even.”

Michele ground something out in Gobbledegook. Bihtok looked surprised for a moment and then responded in the same language before turning back to Harry.

“Her father taught her proper manners. Now, you are looking for her mother. I was the goblin-in-charge of the negotiations with the Sasquatch. Her father was the lead negotiator for us and her mother was the lead for their side.

“Excuse me,” Fleur interrupted. “I thought the Yeti were a primitive, violent race of limited intelligence.”

“I said Sasquatch, not Yeti!” Bihtok snapped back at her.

“They are related races,” Collins smoothly inserted himself. “but their branches split long ago. I know most Wizarding texts make them the same race, but the Sasquatch is a bit smaller and weaker, but much brighter. Consider the link between apes and humans.” Fleur nodded in understanding.

Bihtok took back the conversation, adding, “The Sasquatch is only found in the Americas. Even before European colonization they limited their contact with the native human tribes to only shamans. When they saw how colonists treated the native humans, they would not have any contact with any human.

“Your father worked a long time to get them to speak to us. We were very surprised when they suddenly appeared here with a human female as their negotiator. To our knowledge they would not trust any human that much. She was very good, but we have never seen her representing any other clients. Nor has she been seen since just before you arrived at your father’s door.”

“Can you contact the Sasquatch and ask them to contact her?” Harry asked.

“No,” Bihtok bluntly answered. “Contacting them is mostly up to them. They live in the wilds, mostly in the American Northwest and Canada. You go camp out in one of their ranges for a while. If they want to talk to you, they’ll approach you.”

“And don’t go stomping around like a bunch of Muggle tourists or hunters,” Collins advised. “That will make them avoid the area.”

The conversation was interrupted by the sudden appearance of a young goblin from the same side entrance Bihtok used earlier. The Gringotts General Manager scowled at the other goblin’s appearance but waved impatiently for him to approach. The young Goblin leant into his boss’s ear to whisper a message. Bihtok glanced sharply at

his worker, and then nodded his agreement. Without another word, the Goblin left the same way he came.

Once he was gone, Bihtok turned to his Human guests. "Several visitors from the British Ministry of Magic have just arrived in the bank. They claim to be from your LEO organization. However, their leader matches the description on one of the new Black Watch."

Michele let out a little squeak as Fleur turned a bit pale. Harry simply nodded.

"They are looking for us," Harry commented.

Bihtok pointed at Michele and said, "For her actually. They claim she was kidnapped and they want to return her to her parents. They have a wizard we know is an agent of the Federal Bureau of Magical Investigation. If the FBMI is involved in a kidnapping case then they usually alert their Muggle brethren in the FBI."

Collins leant back in his chair in consideration. "That is an effective move on their part. Both the FBI and the FBMI take kidnappings very seriously." A cynical sneer crossed his face. "Especially if the press gets wind of a cute, young white girl as the victim. You won't be able to go anywhere with her photo being shown on the news 24/7." Harry felt a mild surprise the reserved man allowed himself to show that much emotion.

"Can we leave without them seeing us?" Fleur asked. The General Manager and his human employee exchanged a glance.

"What is it?" Harry asked.

"By treaty, Gringotts is neutral territory. We can neither help you nor them," Collins answered for his boss. "To do so would place the treaty in danger and we are not willing to do that."

"Well, that's honest enough," Harry murmured thinking quickly. "Are they in your waiting area or the lobby?"

"The lobby," Bihtok answered.

A slow smile crossed Harry's face. "Is Counsellor Travis still outside as well?" At Bihtok's nod, Harry smiled. "Sometimes the best diversions are the ones that no one set up."

--BD--

"This way, Mrs. Teach," Collins instructed as he led Fleur and Michele out of Bihtok's office. The bank employee led the pair past the fuming Counsellor and his small entourage towards the entrance to the bank lobby. Just short of the entrance doors, Collins gestured, saying, "Our Ladies room is here, madam."

With a simple nod of thanks, Fleur led Michele into the clearly marked washroom. The moment they were out of sight, Travis was on his feet.

"How much longer must I wait?! I have important commitments and I can't afford to waste my time sitting here!"

Collins raised his hands in a placating gesture just as the doors from the lobby opened. The young goblin from Bihtok's office appeared leading four wizards in the robes of the Black Watch. The wizard in front was a giant of a man with long blonde hair.

Eric Thorenson started to lead his men around Travis and Collins when Travis challenged him. "Where do you think you are going?"

"Out of my way," Thorenson ordered. "Ministry business."

"Ministry?" Travis asked in an incredulous voice. "You have no authority here! I am a member of the Wizards Council. You have no jurisdiction here."

"We have urgent business," Thorenson insisted. "We are pursuing a kidnapper. He was seen entering this bank. He had his victim and a female accomplice with him. Now, you are delaying us!"

Travis wasn't backing down. "I don't know how things work where you come from, but we have a little thing here called laws! You are required to have an American Magical law enforcement agent with

you at all times while on U.S. soil. Where is your escort?"

The large latter-day Viking glared down at the smaller wizard with an expression that many raided villagers of the past would have recognized, but Thorenson seemed to take a grip on himself and backed down.

"I apologize, Counsellor," the Black Watch leader growled out. "The sight of the criminal overrode my training. We just arrived this morning in New York and took a train here to Washington. We were waiting for our FBMI contact outside when we saw the kidnapper arrive."

Travis looked at the man sharply but then nodded his acceptance. "The only man with a woman and child came in and went into Bihtok's office. He should still be in there."

Thorenson's eyes widened and with a shout the Watchman charged past with his wand drawn. He was followed by his fellow Watchmen, plus Collins and the young goblin yelling their protests. By the time Thorenson reached Bihtok's office door, security goblins were pouring out of hidden doors. This led to a shouted argument. The arrival of the FBMI agent five minutes later screaming that he told them to wait for the warrant made it even worse as he took his British counterparts to task for the legal snafu.

--BD--

Outside the goblins' bank, a young woman and her daughter climbed into a taxi. In moments it was lost in a sea of traffic moving around the nation's capital.

Fleur kept turning periodically to check out the back window for anyone following them. After the fifth time, Michele giggled. When Fleur gave her a quizzical look, Michele leant up to whisper in to her ear.

"They didn't see us leave."

"How can you be sure?"

Michele smiled sweetly. "Mr. Travis saw us sneaking out. I smiled and waved to him. That's when he sent the Watchmen in the other direction." Now Michele's smile turned impish. "Besides, every time you turn around you come close to sitting on your purse. Gramps wouldn't like it if you squish him."

The slight squeaking of a bat came from the purse as Harry made his agreement known.

--BD--

Within ten hours, Michele's picture seemed to be posted everywhere. Law enforcement was using the photo from her passport along with Harry and Fleur's. The accompanying story was guaranteed to get anyone's help for the police. The media told the story of a poor, but sweet, innocent orphan girl taken in by an unscrupulous man claiming to be her uncle. They claimed that Harry Potter was a sex offender with a long and violent history, putting Michele's life in constant danger.

Even the criminal element that would never think of assisting the police would call in reports of their sighting.

Harry had to admit the plan was clever. It kept him from easily hiding in the Muggle and magical worlds at the same time. Fortunately, he had a way around it.

Fred and George Weasley were potions experts in any timeline. If Snape had not been such a biased git, he would have realized in their First year the terrible twosome were the most talented potions brewers he'd ever taught. Almost every one of their pranks was based on potions. They were also very good enchanters, but potions were their real strength.

The pair developed a way of placing Polyjuice Potion inside a Muggle-style medical capsule. Simply swallow along with a hair of your target and you get thirty minutes in the new form. A simple visit

to a Muggle hair salon before leaving England gave Harry all of the samples he would ever need for the three 'fugitives'.

--BD--

A nice cashier's check and a wandless Confundus Charm ensured no one questioned the older couple with their sixteen year-old daughter simply walking into the RV dealership, buying one and driving off in under two hours. The dealer even provided a full tank of gas for the large motorhome. The Confundous wasn't really needed; it was the end of the month and the sale was needed to push the dealer over his quota. He was too busy thinking about what he would spend his commission check on to think about how odd this sale was. Or the fact the client's wife had them paint 'Queen Anne's Revenge' with an odd pirate on the front when her husband had left to use their loo.

Ten minutes after leaving the dealer, the only person upset was Michele. The Polyjuice Potion wore off, placing her back into her twelve-year-old body. Sitting in the front seat next to Harry, Fleur simply smiled listening to Michele complaining in the back of the motorhome.

"It's not fair! I liked being sixteen! I had boobs!"

Harry frowned and tried to concentrate on his driving. Fleur's smile grew when she heard Harry mutter, "I think I'm glad I missed Katie and Tia's teenage years!" Then he cringed at Michele's unknowing response.

"I want my boobs back!"

AN: Sorry for the long delay. Family and work come first to writing. Hopefully I will get more writing time in the next few weeks.

I have created a Yahoo group for my writing. You will find PDF's of my completed stories and Word copies of *Balancing Destinies*. Starting with chapter 14, I will post the pre-beta version there once I am done with it. Also, I may post story ideas I am playing with for comment.

The closing scene of this chapter reflects some of my own experience having a teenage daughter and her friends around.



## Chapter 14 – Pirates' Run

7 July 1999

"Thank you, Mr. Teach. Here are your room keys. Please let the front desk know if you need anything. Have a pleasant stay."

Harry accepted the keys from the attractive young woman working at the hotel counter and thanked her. As he turned to leave, he noticed a small stand containing Wizarding brochures. Harry felt a small Muggle-repealing ward as he stepped next to the display and pulled out a few visitor guides.

The RV was parked in the St. Louis, Missouri area hotel parking lot in the late summer afternoon. The sun was setting over the hotel casting a large shadow across the large vehicle pulled into an open parking area consuming several spots. The man known as Edward Teach walked stiffly back towards his RV with a groan. Hours on the road took a toll in stiff muscles and a numb bum. Harry's comfort at driving the RV had increased with all the drive time, but he was not ready for simply how big the United States really was. The distance from London to Berlin, Germany is about 930 km (578 miles). By comparison, the distance from Washington DC to St. Louis was almost 1,150 km (714 mi) as the dragon flies.

Unfortunately, they hadn't taken the most direct route.

In order to throw off anyone following them, they moved north through Maryland and into Pennsylvania. To further build the evidence that the three were simply Muggle tourists, the three did take time to stop at certain landmarks and attractions. Their longest stop was in the town of Gettysburg.

Harry felt moved walking the battlefield at Gettysburg. The three-day battle had killed so many American soldiers. The clash of the Northern and Southern forces turned the tide of the war towards the North's favour, but the warrior in Harry realized the cost the soldiers paid here.

Like the war against Voldemort and the new fight with the phantom Dark Lord, every fighter who fell in the American Civil War was a citizen of the same country. It was easy to shrug off that fact without thinking about the true ramifications of that point. Every man killed, every building or business destroyed was something in their own country. It was like a family getting into a fight and destroying their own house. Standing atop Cemetery Ridge and walking through the Devil's Den where over 46,000 men were killed or wounded in three days, it saddened Harry to realize that none of them, magical or Muggle had learnt their lesson yet.

The battlefield was dotted with the occasional ghost from both sides of the conflict. Men in the uniforms of the Union and the Confederacy stood talking in pairs or wandering alone, their conflict long forgotten. None of them approached Harry, but instead seemed to nod at him in a type of recognition before drifting away.

Harry was still a bit shaken as he resumed his drive the next morning.

The drive to St. Louis continued without any sign of magical pursuit. The Queen Anne's Revenge had proceeded east for the last several days avoiding major highways and population centres when they could. Fleur and Michele made the best of things as they entertained themselves and Harry. The two witches surprised Harry by having very good voices when Fleur conjured a guitar and started to play.

St. Louis was approximately one-third of the way between Washington D.C. and their destination somewhere in the American Northwest. It was a calculated risk but Harry figured Fleur and Michele deserved a good night's rest in a real bed and access to real showers. Michele in particular was looking a bit worn from the travel. His great-granddaughter's system was still fighting the Lycanthropy but it still weakened her. Harry wanted her to have a chance to regain her strength before continuing on.

"I don't think I will ever complain about Portkeys again," Harry muttered as he started walking over to the RV. Harry felt himself cross a warning ward Fleur erected while Harry had gone to check in.

"We are all checked in," Harry announced as he stepped into the large camper. "If you are ready, we can go up to our rooms."

Fleur appeared instantly with a large bag over her shoulder. Michele was right behind her with a matching bag. Fleur snatched the room keys as she passed. "Merci beaucoup. You can bring the rest of the bags and lock up." Michele gave her great-grandfather a cheeky little smile as she followed the older Veela out of the RV.

Harry snickered as he watched the two enter the hotel. A small charm cast on a necklace each of them wore would alert him if they were in danger and provide their location, but watching them safely enter the building still felt right. With a shrug, Harry turned to grab the three bags Fleur considered 'essential' for her overnight stay at the hotel and the one each for he and Michele.

'Thank Merlin for Lightening spells,' Harry thought as he carried the bags out of the RV and followed along into the hotel.

--BD--

"Gramps?" Michele called as Harry exited his room's bathroom. "Can we go shopping, please?" This was asked with a sweet, innocent smile that all fathers recognized. "There is a Wizarding centre nearby according to this guide you picked up." She waved the brightly coloured pamphlet Harry found by the front desk.

"I'm not sure that would be a good idea," Harry explained. "We are trying to stay out of sight."

"Please, Gramps? I won't play anymore pranks for the rest of the trip!" She threw in the sad-eyed puppy dog look with the not-quite whine.

"No, Michele, we are not going shopping. End of discussion."

--BD--

"I can face down Dark Lords, corrupt politicians, and homicidal professors, but I can't hold out against a Second year Hufflepuff witch," Harry muttered as he pulled up in the hire car the hotel had provided him.

Against Harry's better judgement, the threesome was now sitting outside what appeared to be a rundown Muggle warehouse. A faded sign that hung down on one side proclaimed it to be Mississippi Meat Warehouse Number 7. Harry could feel the subtle Muggle-repealing wards and Notice-Me-Not charms as they approached the location noted in the guidebook.

Unlike the magical Alleys favoured in Europe, North American magicals took their cue from their Muggle counterparts. Hidden magical malls served as the centre of shopping and commerce.

"The entrance should be just past the sign," Fleur noted in an amused voice. Harry grimaced at the laughter he heard in her voice.

"Take your Polyjuice now," Harry said as they pulled up.

Michele pouted, "Why can't I be a teenager again?"

Fleur suppressed the urge to roll her eyes at the younger witch. "Just be glad this one is the same size you normally are or all of the new clothes wouldn't fit you."

Michele perked up at that. "Gramps is getting me new clothes?! Yay!" She threw the pill down her throat and scampered out of the small car.

"Thanks a lot, Fleur," Harry grumbled.

Fleur smiled impishly at the wizard known as the Count. "Oh, please, as if you had any chance of not giving in to her. If she were not such an angel, she would be a really spoilt brat the way she has you wrapped around her little finger!"

Harry shrugged, not knowing what to say. Emotional discussions were never his strong point. He was saved by the object of Fleur's comment.

"Come on! What is taking so long?" the excited preteen asked in an impatient tone.

--BD--

Harry had to admit that the magical mall had something going for it. It lacked the charm of London's Diagon Alley or Berlin's restored Die Ruhe des Zauberers, but the faux-warehouse was brilliant in its own way. The entrance looked like a Muggle loading dock; complete with a nearby dumpster, empty pallets and some discarded truck tires. Once inside, a magical ceiling like in Hogwarts's Great Hall covered the two layer shopping mall. It looked much like a high end Muggle mall except instead of DVDs, computers, Macys, and Nike; the magical mall had fashionable robes for wizards and witches, goblins, brooms, and potions ingredients.

Michele dragged Fleur into a shop catering to teenage witches named 'Sabrina's Closet' leaving Harry outside the shop watching the other shoppers pass by. It was a low probability of any Black Watch operatives wandering by, but it paid to be careful.

Forty-five minutes passed and playing the role of a bored father dragged to the mall was no longer an act. To avoid wondering exactly how much Fleur and Michele were spending, Harry let his mind tackle the more manageable problems at hand, such as what they should do once they reached their destination. Harry's mind muddled on the advice Collins had given to 'don't go stomping around like a bunch of Muggle tourists or hunters'. Another fifteen minutes passed before Harry realized the answer was right in front of him. Literally.

Smethsyk's Flying Emporium stood almost directly across the hall from the clothing store Fleur and her young apprentice had disappeared into. Displays of racing brooms, magic carpets, and various Quodpot gear filled the front window. Not too surprisingly, the shop had mostly school age wizards looking at the merchandise.

'Could it be that easy?' Harry wondered to himself.

Casting a subtle ward over the entrance to the clothing store, Harry casually wandered into the broom store. Harry felt a pang of nostalgia seeing the boys drooling over the latest brooms and arguing their merits. It reminded him of going into Quality Quidditch Supplies with Ron during his Hogwarts years before the war buggered everything up.

After a couple of minutes of looking around, an older wizard wearing a coverall with the logo of the shop walked over to Harry. "May I help you, sir?"

Harry had been admiring the high-end brooms. A number of very nice brooms competed for space with the familiar Firebolt and Nimbus 2001. Harry pointed at the broom next to the Firebolt. "What kind of broom is that? I don't recognize it."

"Ah," the man smiled. "That is an Iveris Lightning II, a shade slower than a Firebolt, but even more manoeuvrable. It is optimized for Quodpot and has inertial dampening charms that reduce the strain on the flyer during high G turns."

Harry felt a smile cross his face. "I bet that takes some getting used to if your reflexes are not used to it."

The clerk laughed easily. "Not too hard. Most have a problem going back to normal broomsticks. They claim the ride is too rough."

Harry nodded his understanding. His Nimbus 2000 had been great, but he didn't think he could go back after having his Firebolt. "What about that one labelled a Quanta Blackbird?"

"Fastest broom in the world," the clerk commented as he turned and reached up to get the broom down. He turned back to Harry and asked, "You're from England, right?"

"Yes."

"That explains it. You won't see this in Europe. It's illegal to sell over there."

"Really?" Harry commented absently as he checked out the broom in the other man's hands. "I thought the Firebolt was the fastest."

"For sports it is," the man agreed. "This is a travelling broom. With such long distances here in the US, think of it as a private airplane. At higher altitudes, it can reach about .84 mach or 555 miles per hour. That's about the same as a Muggle 747 aircraft."

Harry's jaw dropped. "That's bloody impossible. You could never hold on! The wind shear would rip you right off."

"True," the clerk chuckled. "You activate a special charm similar to a Bubblehead Charm. It creates a bubble around the broom. It gives the rider breathable air at .7 atmospheres and creates a bubble of warm, still air around the broom. Carpets do the same thing but have a top speed of 80 miles an hour.

"Plus it has a Muggle Notice-Me Not charm to prevent passing airplanes from noticing you." The man snorted in amusement. "Half the UFO sightings in the US are from kids on brooms doing tricks at night. And unless you get stupidly close to one of the military radar installations or wear a suit of metal armour, you won't show up on radar as anything more than a ghost image."

Harry grinned at that. His recent 're-enactment' of the Endor speeder bike chase in London made that idea all too funny. "Why is it illegal in Europe?"

"Same reason I can't send carpets over there either," the clerk grunted. "Protecting the local market. 'Sides, they don't really need it over there. Everything is pretty settled and the Floo Network covers most of it. Ours is rather spotty depending on the size of the local magical population."

"And how much are they?"

"800 Galleons, sir."

Harry nodded. "Very nice. Too bad I am only here on holiday. I've always been rather rubbish at flying. Sure I couldn't handle anything like that. Thank you very much for your time." With a polite nod, Harry turned and made his way out of the shop.

The clerk muttered his goodbye as he turned to place the broom back into its holder. He'd been sure the odd stranger was a definite sale.

--BD--

Two hours later, the Teach family emerged from the magical mall with a number of shrunken bags stashed into pockets. After the witches emerged from their shopping, Harry led them off to a magical outdoor shop.

Harry told the store's clerk they were going camping in the Colorado Rockies and then heading to the Grand Canyon. He purchased a Wizarding tent and other provisions the clerk recommended for those locations. Harry was sure he bought too much stuff that would never be used, but it fit with the naive foreign tourist role he was playing.

The pair of Veela witches enjoyed their shopping excursion. Harry was thankful for shrinking and feather-weight charms when he was informed that he would be responsible for carrying everything back to the RV.

That seemed rather unfair to Harry.

--BD--

The magical mall was much less crowded later that night as a nondescript man in jeans and a tee shirt made his way down its hall. His walk seemed casual but a trained observer would have noted a definite sense of purpose to his walk.

It was only after passing Smethsyk's Flying Emporium twice that the man wandered into the store. The crowd of young teenage wizards that filled the store before were gone to be replaced by a few older teenagers off in a corner discussing Quodpot strategies. The same clerk from earlier in the day was still behind the counter.

"Can I help you, sir?"

"Can a Quanta Blackbird safely carry a second passenger or is it one person only?"

The clerk smiled, no doubt sensing a sale. "The Blackbird can handle a load up to a combined weight of 700 pounds. Performance degrades after 300 pounds or so though. It is charmed for two seats and a third can be added for young children with additional restraining charms."



The nondescript man nodded. "Excellent, I'll..."

"You, clerk," an imperious voice interrupted. "Come here at once."

The clerk and Harry both turned to look at the source of the interruption. A pack of young wizards in casual but expensive looking clothes had entered the shop with an arrogant air that forcefully reminded Harry of Draco Malfoy and his cronies when they were the Inquisitional Squad. The young toughs consisted of four wizards and three witches, none of whom looked old enough to be out of school. Harry guessed Sixth or Seventh years; or whatever the Yanks called it.

"My broomstick requires servicing and I insist you deal with it at once!" The offending broomstick was dropped on the counter, almost hitting Harry with the bristled end.

"Maybe if you handled it right, it wouldn't need service in the first place."

It was only when the seven teenagers turned to scowl at Harry that he realized he'd spoken out loud. 'Damn it,' he thought. 'So much for keeping a low profile.'

"What did you say, twig?" the brown-haired ponce with the broom sneered. He took a step towards Harry in an attempt to look intimidating.

Harry assumed an innocent expression. "I was merely commenting that you obviously haven't cared for your broom properly from the rough patches on the handle and the mess the bristles are in."

The teenager's face flushed red as his friends snickered slightly at the innuendo they read into Harry's comments. Meanwhile, Harry was cursing himself mentally for allowing this Malfoy clone to provoke him.

Harry turned back to the shocked clerk and said, "I will take two of the Blackbirds, please."

Excitement knocked the clerk out of his shock. "Two?" At Harry's nod, the clerk scurried into the stockroom. Harry could almost see the man counting his commission.

"Who did you steal the money for that from, hedge-boy?" It was the ponce again. "You're not from around here. I know all the wizards of calibre and you're not from any of those families.

"Just passing through," Harry allowed.

"Hmm, he sounds British," one of the witches commented in a throaty voice. The girl had deep black, almost blue, hair and was dressed in a black sheer robe that reached to her mid thighs. The material of the robes was transparent enough to hint a great deal without actually showing anything. The overall effect would have been sexy if not for the 'psycho-Bellatrix' air she had going. She sauntered up to Harry in a seductive manner. Placing one hand on Harry's shoulder, she rubbed her body up against Harry. "Hmm, smells British too."

"Smells British?" one of the other American teen wizards asked with a snort.

"Yes, he smells like one of those weak, inbreed Purebloods," the witch purred as she slinked back behind Harry. She put her nose almost into Harry's ear and took a deep sniff. "Yes, just like one of those weak Purebloods," she almost sighed.

Harry seemed to ignore her as he focused on the young wizard in front of him; in his peripheral vision though he kept an eye on her.

"Probably so weak he can barely cast a Lumos," one of the cronies jeered.

"Too busy doing his sister," another provided to the amusement of the others.

"Krystal, get away from him," the gang's leader called the girl. "We wouldn't want you to catch any bugs."

"Oh, Derek, I never get to have any fun," the girl, Krystal, whined as she started to play with Harry's hair.

Harry was considering his options when the clerk returned with a pair of broom-sized boxes in his arms.

The clerk set the boxes onto the counter with a smile until he noticed the tension between Harry and the local teens. He looked hesitantly at the teens and then turned to Harry. "May I just take care of this gentleman while you look at your new brooms, sir?"

Harry nodded, grateful that the older wizard provided a distraction to the teen witches and wizards. He wasn't concerned with the teens per se, but this confrontation was drawing too much attention. He was just glad Fleur and Michele were safely back in the hotel.

Seeing Derek's attention was now focused on verbally abusing the clerk and demanding his broom be repaired by the next day, Krystal whispered in Harry's ear. "I suggest you get out of here quickly. Derek just got adopted by the Travis family. He wants to throw his weight around."

"Councillor Travis?" Harry asked as his stomach turned over. Of course, it had to be *that* Travis family. What else would it be in the life of Harry Potter?

Krystal hummed her agreement to Harry's question. "Why are you telling me this?" Harry asked.

"You're not up to his weight class, Pureblood, and I hate bullies." She kissed the back of Harry's neck and added, "There's no sport to it." With that she giggled and strutted her way back over to her friends and draped herself over Bill's shoulder.

'Why do I always attract the psycho witches?' Harry wondered idly as he kept an eye on the group while pretending to look at some of the other equipment on display.

Derek was finished with the clerk and turned to leave the shop when he turned called back over his shoulder, "You take care, Pureblood. Accidents can happen to you twigs." With that parting shot, he strode out of the shop his robe flaring behind him as his cronies followed with laughter.

"That was only a five on the Snape scale," Harry muttered in amusement. "Even Malfoy did it better by Third year."

The clerk approached Harry with a sigh of relief. "Thank you, sir, for not taking offence to those young idiots. Young Derek used to be a good kid until he tested out as a rather powerful wizard. His parents were squibs and now that he is a Travis he is overcompensating. His new father is a major stockholder in this store so I have to put up with it."

Harry waved off the man's apologies. "I've dealt with worse." The clerk smiled and they turned back to business.

Ten minutes later Harry was leaving the shop with a pair of shrunken brooms in his pocket and a befuddled clerk left behind. The Confundus Charm would allow the clerk to remember the transaction occurred but blurred the details and his impressions of his customer.

Harry emerged from the magical mall into the night air and was walking to the hire car when his instincts screamed causing him to jump to his left. One of his wands dropped automatically into his hand as he whirled to face his attacker.

Or attackers as it turned out.

"Not bad for a twig," Derek sneered.

"I don't want trouble," Harry said in a firm tone. "Just let me leave and we'll all be happier."

"You might be happier but we're bored and you're gonna entertain us!" Derek answered with a smile. Harry remembered seeing that same smile on Dudley's face when his gang found a little kid to beat up.

Three of the sidekick wizards threw spells at Harry that he dodged casually. Harry recognized the spells as they were cast. Two of them were NEWT standard and the third was a border-line Dark curse that Hogwarts didn't teach. He would have been impressed by the first two if this was a demonstration in class. The third would have lost fifty points and a been a week detention.

"Nimble little twig, ain't ya?" Derek sneered. "Can't you even cast a shield charm?"

Harry pointed his wand at the group. "This is your last warning. Leave now."

"What are you going to do, Pureblood?" one of the cronies growled.

Harry recognized him from earlier. "Just a little light spell. *Bombus lux!*" The Flash Bang Charm created a sudden flare of light with a thunderous sonic boom. The sudden flare caught the unprepared American teens by surprise.

Cries of shock and anguish filled the air as the teens squeezed their eyes shut and covered their ears with their hands as their eyes were overwhelmed with the bright spot that still filled their vision and the boom caused pain in their ears. Harry almost felt bad for the teens but they pushed this confrontation.

"*Accio* wands," Harry cast. The cries increased in protest as the teens felt their wands leap away. Harry caught the wands easily than cast a minor healing charm that restored the would-be bullies vision.

"You bastard!" Derek yelled at Harry. He started to storm at Harry His advance came to an abrupt end as he noticed Harry's wand pointed directly at his heart.

In his best professorial tones, Harry commented, "Today's lesson is Basic Dueling 101. Don't be so taken with your most powerful spells that you forget what an opponent with a bit of cunning and wit can do with a common everyday charm. Here ends the lesson.

"I'll leave your wands just down the street. You can get them later."

The American teens looked at Harry in disbelief as he put their wands in his pocket. An odd look crossed the witch named Krystal's face.

"Who are you?" she asked.

Harry grinned, "Would you believe I'm just a guy on vacation?"

"You won't get away with this!" Derek hissed.

Harry grinned back, "Yes, and I'll rue the day too. But not today." Harry caught Krystal's shocked eyes and said, "You lot really shouldn't let your prejudices get ahead of you. *Sopous!*"

The Sleeping Gas Charm created a cloud of gas around the teens allowing only an instant of panic before they dropped to the ground asleep. Harry snickered as he levitated their sleeping forms into the nearby dumpster.

Harry stepped over to his car. True to his word, Harry drove a short distance down the street before stopping to put the wands up against a nearby building with a small ward to prevent anyone but the wands' owners from finding them. That done, Harry smiled as he drove off back to the hotel.

--BD--

10 July 1999

The RV travelled I-70 west to Kansas City and then north on I-29 towards Omaha, Nebraska. They passed through Missouri, Nebraska, Colorado, and Wyoming before crossing into their destination in Idaho. They drove around the clock switching between Harry and Fleur driving six hours a shift, only stopping for food and fuel.

When Harry returned to the hotel with his new brooms, he told Fleur and Michele about his run in with the young witches and wizards at the magical mall. While Michele thought it was fun, Fleur frowned at how poorly Harry handled the situation.

"The rude git just wouldn't let it go!" Harry defended. Harry related what Krystal whispered to him. "He was like a kid with a new wand, trying to cast any spell he could think of."

Fleur assumed a haughty expression. "Very well. I guess it just shows that the only thing more uncouth than an English wizard is an American one!" Unlike the Fleur from the first timeline, this Fleur made the comment with a teasing glint in her eye. Harry huffed in

mock indignation but hit her with a wandless Tickling Charm as soon as she turned away from him.

--BD--

Harry felt something like relief as the RV approached Boise. Driving across the United States was a very long, but very interesting experience. So much of the country was still undeveloped and empty. They had driven across all kinds of terrain from plains to mountains. The oddest sight was one not long after entering Idaho. They passed a llama ranch of all things. But what made it really memorable was the rancher's wife chasing him with a large frying pan while wearing a leather bustier, leather boots with six inch stiletto heels and a studded miniskirt. Fleur was impressed by the woman's ability to move so quickly across grass in those heels.

It was Fleur's casual remark a minute later that really caused Harry problems.

Her French accent softly came out as she absently commented, "I wonder if I should wear something like that so I can fit in better with these Muggles." Harry couldn't see her, but he heard Michele giggle from somewhere behind him.

--BD--

They parked the RV in a lot not far from the local airport just after sunset. The lot provided off-site parking for the airport and included a shuttle bus to the terminals. Harry told the attendants that they were on holiday but a family matter came up and they had to fly out to take care of it. Harry pre-paid for a week in the parking lot.

The small family loaded onto the shuttle bus with only three small carry-on sized bags. The bus took them to the small international terminal of the airport. Harry purchased three tickets to Paris via a stopover in Chicago. A small Confundus Charm caused the woman at the ticket counter to trick the system into showing the three boarded the flight on-time and left with the plane.

Harry led them two witches to a small, unoccupied niche that was out of sight. He cast Notice-Me Not and Dissillusionment Charms on all

each. Fleur transfigured their bags into rucksacks. The spell work done, Harry led them back out of the airport terminal. Within five minutes they were mounted on their brooms and leaving Boise behind in the growing darkness.

--BD--

The area north of Boise was mountainous with only a spars covering of trees. Michele rode behind Harry as they flew several thousand feet over the mountain ridges below. Although the brooms were moving at almost five hundred miles an hour, the broom's charms kept the wind down to a pleasant breeze with a very comfortable air temperature around them. And unlike a Muggle aircraft, the brooms were silent in the night sky.

After flying for forty minutes, the two brooms were over 300 miles north of Boise. The sparse tree growth had given into thickly forested, rugged lands. Even from this height, Harry could only see distant lights. Below him the land was pitch black. If not for a charm allowing Harry and Fleur to see in low light conditions, they would have been flying completely blind. Casting a quick navigation charm, Harry reckoned that they were over Cour D'Alene National Forest.

Harry turned and gestured to Fleur to follow them down. After she nodded her confirmation, he turned his head to speak over his shoulder.

"Hold on Michele. We're going to land now."

Michele yawned against Harry's back. "Good, I'm falling asleep back here. I'm so bored I'd even do homework."

Harry chuckled as he rolled the broom into a dive. Michele yelled her encouragement as Fleur took a more ... relaxed decent into the forest below.

Pulling out of the dive, Harry flew just above treetop level looking for an appropriate clearing to set up camp. Fleur joined them just as Harry found a clearing on a small rise with a wide, but shallow stream below the rise.



The two brooms landed in the field and the three riders climbed off. Leaving the brooms deactivated the charms, revealing that even in the height of summer the mountain nights were cool.

“Set up the tent so Michele can get inside and stay warm,” Fleur directed Harry. “This cold air is not good for her.”

“I’m fine, Fleur,” Michele insisted in a tired voice. “I’m just sleepy.”

“You are still fighting the infection,” Fleur insisted. “The harder you make it for your body to fight the less time we have to find a cure.”

Fleur drew her wand and transfigured several nearby rocks into a neat little fire pit. With smooth efficiency, Fleur summoned a nearby log. A single spell split and stacked the wood in spot convenient to the fire pit. Several pieces of wood floated into the pit. “*Incendio!*”

When she was finished, she saw Harry had the tent up. Harry and Michele were watching her with shocked expressions at her creation of the camp fire.

“What is wrong?” she asked.

Harry shook his head. “I’m impressed. That’s all.”

Fleur smiled teasingly. “What? Veela are supposed to live in great castles and high society? Prim and proper princesses?”

“I am,” Michele giggled back.

Fleur smiled back as she acknowledged the younger part-Veela’s comment. “Some of us are,” Fleur admitted. “Veela are descended from mountain nymphs. My grandmother insisted we grow up with some of the traditional Veela values. I spent many summers in their villages and camping in the Alps.”

Harry nodded at the admission. He would have never expected the Fleur he originally knew to have experience camping. Could that have been an effect of a ripple in the timeline?

Fleur turned to Michele and imperiously ordered her into the tent. Michele's grumbled, "Are all Healers dictators at heart?" as she passed her great-grandfather caused Harry to chuckle.

"I've always thought so," Harry agreed.

Fleur turned on Harry with a mock scowl. "Don't encourage her! Or I will see that you need a physical too, Monsieur Potter!"

Before Harry could come back, Michele spoke up. "Oh please. You've wanted to give Gramps a physical every since that dinner in Switzerland. Gabrielle noticed it that night too."

Harry's jaw dropped as Fleur whirled on Michele in surprise. "You little witch!" Fleur yelled as the young girl ran laughing into the tent.

Harry tried to assume a neutral expression but Fleur wasn't buying it. "Not one word," the French Healer growled. She stalked towards the tent opening.

"And don't get any ideas!" she called back.

After she was gone, Harry erected wards around the camp anchored on the largest rock in the fire pit. The wards included Muggle Repealing, Proximity and Dark Magic Detectors. It was enough for a camp site. Stronger wards would take too much effort for a temporary shelter.

His task done, Harry casual transfigured a rock into a comfortable chair near the fire. Sitting by the fire and enjoying the mountain air sounded like a much better idea than going into the tent and possibly getting caught in the fight between Fleur and Michele.

--BD--

11 July 1999

After two days in the woods, Harry was starting to get anxious. Although there were recent reports of 'Big Foot' sightings in this area, they had seen no sign of the creatures. The closest they had come was when a bear wandered out of the woods to drink at the stream

below. Harry kept his wand ready while Michele squealed about how cute the animal was.

Fleur and Michele settled into a comfortable routine of reading in the tent and discussing Michele's assignments. For all of Fleur's earlier comments, she seemed content to stay in the tent and keeping her patient company.

Michele's teasing of Fleur created some awkwardness between the two adults. Fleur waved Harry off when he mentioned it the next morning.

"Fleur, I want to apologize for what Michele said last night. She had no call to ..."

"It is okay, 'Arry," Fleur interrupted quickly. "She is only a little girl being silly. Don't think about it too much."

Harry accepted her assurances, but after fighting Voldemort and then Grindelwald, Harry was adept at reading body language. Fleur was hiding something. Harry was content to let it lay for now.

Although it had been more than two years subjectively for Harry since losing Sarah, Harry didn't think he was ready to think about romance yet. It wasn't an issue with Fleur. Harry found he enjoyed her company much more now than in the last timeline. It could be the change was on his part, but since getting caught up in the Ministry's war on all things Potter, the witch had held up nicely.

The simple fact was, losing his wife and then in a single night his two sons, a grandson, and two son-in-laws reminded Harry all too well of the circumstances that led him to travel back to the 1930's to start with. Getting involved with anyone when the remainder of his family was still in danger seemed selfish and fool-hardy to Harry.

The camp wards gave a sudden twitch as something intelligent crossed the proximity border. Harry leapt to his feet as his wand dropped into his hand.

"Lower your wand, Harry Potter. You won't need it with us."

The voice was behind him! Harry turned quickly in an attempt to spot the speaker. How had they moved behind him?! The ward intrusion was in the other direction.

"I said you don't need your wand, Harry Potter. We come in peace."

From behind a large tree the speaker suddenly appeared. Harry almost yelled in shock.

"Bloody hell! You're as big as Hagrid!" And he was. The Sasquatch was about eleven feet tall with an incredibly muscled upper body and arms. His arms were oddly long, reaching almost down to his knees. The being's entire body was covered in thick, silky hair except for his face. His face looked similar to an ape with the leathery brown skin.

The Sasquatch moved away from the tree that looked entirely too small to conceal his form. "Ah yes, I have heard of Rubeus Hagrid. A friend tells me he possesses a truly gentle soul."

Surprise was making it hard to think. "How did you get over there? You crossed the ward over there."

"We have been watching you for some time, Harry Potter." The Sasquatch stopped twenty feet from Harry. For a creature that size, it was only two strides from stepping on the wizard with its huge feet.

"We?"

"My tribe." The Sasquatch gestured around him with one great, hairy arm. Harry glanced around and noticed three more Sasquatches standing just inside the tree line on either side.

Harry slowly placed his wand into its holster and made an elaborate show that he was unarmed. "You know who I am and why we are here?"

"We do, Harry Potter. Our mutual friend spoke for you. If not for his backing, we would not have approached you. We would have simply taken the young one to be healed."

Setting the implications of that aside, as politely as he could Harry asked, "Since you know my name, may I ask yours?"

The huge being seemed to smile and gestured at his own chest. "You may call me Joshua."

"It is nice to meet you, Joshua. May I ask who is this mutual friend?"

A sudden flash of fire burst directly between Harry and his visitor. Harry started to shield his eyes when a familiar cry stopped him.

"Fawkes?!"

The phoenix let out an excited chirp as it landed on Harry's shoulder. Fawkes let out a laughing trill as he hopped about on his new perch.

"Is this where you went after Albus died?" a stunned Harry Potter asked.

"Gramps?" Michele called from the tent. "I thought I heard... FAWKES!" Fawkes let out another chirp of welcome to the youngest Potter. Then Michele noticed the other visitor standing in front of Harry, her face paling in shock. "Gramps?"

"Michele, this is Joshua. Come say hello."

Michele hesitantly walked over to stand at Harry's side where she reached up to pet Fawkes. "Hello Joshua."

Joshua bowed slightly from his waist. "Greetings, cousin."

"Cousin?" Harry and Michele asked at the same time.

Joshua lowered himself to his knees so he was closer to eye level with the young witch. A sad, gentle expression crossed his face. "Your mother and mine shared grandparents."

"But I'm not like you!" Michele protested. "Wouldn't I be big and hairy too? Or is that just the boy Sasquatches? 'Cause Gramps is hairy too."

A low rumbling chuckle rumbled in Joshua's chest as the other Sasquatches let out odd backs of what Harry hoped was laughter.

"Indeed cousin. Our females are hairy too," Joshua assured her. "It is a long story on how we came to include some half-humans in our people." At his gesture, Harry and Michele sat down in chairs next to the fire. Joshua sat down on the ground across the fire but still towered over them.

Joshua paused a moment and then started to speak. "A long time ago, before the coming of colonists, one of the tribe's young bucks named Anned was roaming along the eastern coast. He came upon a party of Norsemen and their ship. In his curiosity, the young buck was not careful and was captured by the Norsemen.

"For some reason, they decided to take him back with them as a prize. After stops in Iceland and Greenland, their ship was blown off course to Ireland. Our ancestor took the opportunity to escape. Anned fled into the countryside and lived by taking what he could for food while trying to find a way home. After six months though, he was starting to give up hope.

"One morning, Anned came across a young woman being attacked by several bandits. As he watched, she fought them off with magic, but not before she was injured. Anned took pity on her and carried her off to his camp. She was the first magical human he had found and he hoped she could help him get home.

"When she awoke from her wounds, she was scared of Anned's size and strength. Soon she came to realize he was gentle and not a danger. By the time she was healthy they were friends."

"Joshua, when was this?" Harry asked when the Sasquatch paused for a moment.

"It was 996 as the humans of your land count the years," Joshua answered.

"What happened next?" Fleur asked. The older witch had emerged from the tent during Joshua's story and had been listening silently. She came to stand behind Harry's chair.

“The witch knew of a potion that allowed humans to take on others’ forms, forest sister. She created a version that allowed Anned to take a human’s form. In that form, they travelled together to find Anned a way home.

“They spent two years together when something new happened. They fell in love. They knew their love was doomed but it happened anyway. In a twist of magic, the witch became pregnant by Anned when he was in human form. When the child was born it was obviously not human. As the child could not take the potion and would be a target of fear from other humans, they decided Anned would have to take the child and come home.

“They stole a ship and the witch cast every charm she could to ensure her love and child would arrive home safely. They never saw one another again.”

“What was the witch’s name?” Michele asked.

“Helga Hufflepuff.”

Harry went pale as he considered the implications of that statement. The Potter line contained the bloodlines of Gryffindor and Ravenclaw. The adoption of Tom brought the Slytherin bloodline into the family. And now Michele brought in the line of Hufflepuff. “The Founders House,” Harry murmured remembering the prophecy.

Unaware of Harry’s shock, Joshua continued his story. “The child, named Martin for his human grandfather, grew and married a female of the Sasquatch, but their son felt his human side pull and mated with a human woman native to these lands as did his son. For two generations after that, the line of Anned mated Sasquatch females. Then your mother met your father. Until your mother had you, all of the children were born favouring their Sasquatch heritage in appearance. It may have been because your mother, Enka, was the first of our females to mate with a human male or it may have been your father’s Veela heritage. But your mother knew you had to go back to your father’s people. And that brings us to today when you return.”

“My mother is here?”

A sad expression settled on Joshua's face. "Alas, she has passed on to the Great Forest. Cubs of the tribe became trapped in a flood. Enka used her human magic to reach them and send them to safety. Before she could get back to safety, a tree collapsed hitting her and knocking her into the flood waters. We found her body the next day. We honour her memory as a True One of the Light." Joshua pointed at a younger Sasquatch standing outside the camp. " X'tel there is one of the cubs she saved that day."

"She's dead too?" Michele cried wrapping her arms around Harry's waist. Harry knelt down to hug his granddaughter. He knew her greatest wish was to find her mum but now she knew she was truly an orphan.

The Sasquatch respectfully silent as Michele cried out her pain and anger on Harry's shoulder. Harry could understand how she felt. While Michele still had family, there was something about losing your parents, or even the dream of finding them again, that was very painful to a child.

'At least her way of dealing with it is healthier then mine,' Harry thought as he held the crying girl. 'I would have been sullen and moody for weeks. But I would have been drier!'

Fawkes let out a squawk and smacked Harry in the back of his head with a wing. Then the magical bird started to sing quietly in his beautiful voice. Michele soon stopped crying and sat holding onto Harry while listening to Fawkes's song.

"Thanks, Fawkes," Michele said a couple of minutes later while wiping the tears from her face and reaching up to Harry's shoulder to rub the fire bird.

"Yah, thanks Fawkes. But what was the smack for?" Fawkes ignored Harry's question to lean into Michele's scratches.

The mood was broken by an odd hoot that came from somewhere in the distance. Harry noticed a sudden tenseness in Joshua's posture. An expression that seemed disapproving appeared on his giant face.

"Problem?"



"Dark Wizards have entered the forest. They are flying in a search. They will not be here soon as the forest is large and covers a vast area. But we must take Michele to our village soon or the way will be closed to us."

"We can breakdown the tent and be ready to leave in five minutes," Harry informed him.

An expression Harry would have called embarrassed crossed Joshua's face.

"What is it?"

"Our little cousin and the forest sister are welcome to enter our lands, but you may not, Harry Potter."

"Why not?" Michele yelled in a shocked voice.

"Our lands are a haven for those pure to the Light. Phoenixes, unicorns, and other Light creatures live there in peace. Indeed, phoenixes and unicorns refuse to do violence for any reason. The magic of our wards will not allow you to cross, Harry Potter."

Harry thought of Fawkes attacking the basilisk and blinding it. He opened his mouth to say it when Fawkes smacked him in the head with a wing again, harder. He turned to glare at the bird and received a matching glare from the immortal avian.

Fawkes look clearly said, "*Keep your big mouth shut!*"

With a final grimace at Fawkes, Harry turned back to Joshua. "Is it because I am a human?"

The Sasquatch shook his head in negation. "You serve the Light, Harry Potter. We know this. The one you call Fawkes speaks highly of you. It is because you have killed other sentient creatures when it was not required."

"What is that supposed to mean?" Harry scowled.

"But I've killed too!" Michele protested in a tiny voice.

"Your aura shows that you killed to save yourself in a situation where the only other option was to die, little one," the Sasquatch explained to Michele. "Even that is questionable by many of our people." Turning to Harry, the disapproving expression appeared again. Joshua explained. "You have placed yourself squarely between the Dark and those you must protect. That is good, but you have taken lives after they were no longer a threat to you. Your willingness to resort to violence stains your aura. Even now you fight your instincts to curse me for my words."

Harry couldn't argue that he was not fighting to hold in his temper.

"I am not saying you were wrong, Harry Potter. Your actions may have saved many lives in the long run, but that does not change the fact you have killed when there were other options."

Harry took a deep breath and focused on what was important here. "But you can help Michele?"

Joshua nodded, "We can leave now. Do you have another such dwelling?" The Sasquatch pointed at the tent. "We do not live in such things and it may be more comfortable if they have one too."

"They can take that one," Harry replied. "I won't need it."

"No, Gramps!" Michele protested just before Fleur added her voice. "We are not going to leave you!"

"Stop," Harry said in a stern voice. "We don't have time for this. Michele, this may be the only way for you to be cured. Fleur, you are her Healer. Watch over her for me."

Harry forced a grin onto his face. "Don't worry about me. I'll be fine. I've been thrown out of better places than this before." To Joshua, he asked, "How long will this take?"

"At least one human week. Maybe more."

"Okay. I will lead our friends away. I'll come back in a week and every other day at noon after that day."

Joshua nodded agreement. "That is acceptable."

In a couple of minutes the tent was down and packed away. The magical fire was extinguished and the ashes scattered to make the site look unused.

"Are you sure you won't need more food or clothes," Fleur asked Harry in a concerned voice once they were ready to leave.

"I'll be fine," he assured her. "Don't worry about me."

After a few more goodbyes and a few tears from Fleur and Michele, Joshua led the two witches into the forest with the other three Sasquatches trailing behind.

Harry watched until they disappeared into the trees. Fawkes was perched on top of the now cold fire pit watching Harry.

"Go with them, Fawkes?" Harry requested. "Make sure they are safe."

Fawkes replied with a trill that was part question and part reassurance.

"Really," Harry assured the phoenix. "Go with them."

With a final chirp, Fawkes took flight. He circled around the camp, coming in low so he brushed the top of Harry's head before disappearing into a flash of fire.

"Cheeky bird."

There was a sudden blurring and where a man stood now sat a large wolf. The wolf let out a long howl before turning and disappearing alone into the trees in the opposite direction.

**A/N: This chapter included a nod to Rorschach's Blot and BobMin, two (or three) of my favourite authors.**

**I realized after chapter 13 I didn't provide a link to my Yahoo group. It is now posted at the bottom of my profile page.**

## Chapter 15 - Skirmishes

12 July 1999

The wolf loped in an easy, ground eating pace through the dark forest. The air was calm and silent in the early summer morning. Moonlight passed through the dense canopy of leaves in patches. The wolf's eyesight compensated casting everything in shades of grey. The American forest lacked the deep, ominous feel of magic of the Forbidden Forest but Harry could almost see gentle currents of magic flowing around his form.

The wolf's other senses were in full play also. He could hear the sound of wizards flying above the trees on their brooms. The wind of their passage caused the still leaves to stir and the wolf could hear the whoosh of displaced air as they made high speed passes. His nose caught the smells of men occasionally. The human portion of the wolf's brain reckoned that meant some of the wizards had landed to search from the ground.

This game of cat and mouse, or wizard and wolf, had been going on for hours now. Initially, Harry thought to buy time for Michele and Fleur to get to the safety of the Sasquatches' sanctuary. Then he would leave the searchers behind.

The first part of the plan worked.

They were now ten miles east and two ridges away from the small clearing where the Potters and Fleur made camp. Harry stopped at one point and created a fake camp, complete with a pair of conjured tents, cots, and a simple fire circle. A little judicious use of a wind charm created the look of a hastily abandoned camp using a charm to erase their tracks as they ran. It wasn't to delay them as much as to keep them from finding the real camp where he would be meeting Michele and Fleur in a week.

They did find the site and Harry thought he had lost them, but thirty minutes later they were back on his trail.

Somehow, the flying wizards were tracking Harry's progress through the forest. They knew roughly where he was but not exactly. It seemed they were concentrating their search in an area half a mile around.

A new scent caught Harry the wolf's attention when the wind shifted slightly. It came from directly ahead. It was a smell similar to one he'd smelt many times before at Hogwarts but subtly different. It smelt of the trees around him but it included a sense of Otherness.

The wolf slowed his pace to a slow walk. He advanced with his head low and his tail almost brushing the ground. He paused occasionally to sniff the air and listen before starting to move again.

It was a sudden movement that caught the wolf's attention and caused Harry to recognize what he was heading into. Unconsciously, the wolf emitted a low growl as his hackles rose and he shifted into an alert, tense position.

## Treants

Treants were related to the Whomping Willow. The huge tree-like creatures were indistinguishable from normal trees until they moved. Their branches could move at amazing speeds to attack without warning. They could also move slowly across the ground with their roots spreading out to push or pull the Treant along. With good ground, a Treant could move up to a mile a day.

Treants were considered Dark Creatures by the British Ministry. For once, Harry agreed with them. The creatures hated all animal life. Humans, elves, centaurs, unicorns, even squirrels were targets. The Treants weren't carnivorous. Their victims' remains were simply left to rot where they fell as the creatures 'shuffled' off to a new area. Not very intelligent creatures, but they displayed a certain level of malicious cunning; kind of like a tree-shaped Crabbe and Goyle.

Harry paused as he considered the grove of Treants in front of him. While the creatures still existed in Britain, they were solitary or pairs in remote places. Maybe four lived in the heart of the Forbidden

Forest and that was the largest known concentration in all of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales.

Now at least twenty of the Dark Creatures loomed ahead of the wolf. That was just what the wolf's eyes could see. Harry had no idea who deep the grove went. There could be fifty, a hundred of the creatures in the dark of the forest. A shiver travelled down Harry's spine at the thought.

Harry slowly backed away along the way he came. He knew he was out of reach of the Treants, but a primitive part of his brain warned him to be wary. He turned to divert around the grove when he heard humans moving through the trees around him.

'Damn!' Harry swore in his mind. He'd spent too much time in one place. It gave them time to localize him, track in on his position. From the sounds they were making, Harry guessed he had a significantly sized group closing in on him. Harry's brain raced as he considered his options. Fighting was risky. He had no idea who he was fighting and what their skills were like. Flying out would be tricky if they still had fliers in the air. In an air chase, even getting hit by a minor spell could cause death if you lost control of a broom at high speed. Going through the Treants was suicide. Unless...

A sudden wolfish smile crossed the face of the large wolf crouched on the ground. It was an idea worthy of the Marauders.

An instant later, a human Harry Potter knelt on the forest floor where the wolf had been. Both wands appeared in his hands as if by magic.

A small stick breaking fifteen metres away caught Harry's attention. The silvery light of a Cutting Curse flew out of Harry's original wand toward the source of the noise. A shrill scream announced its score on his target.

"He's over here! " A voice commanded. "Move in!" It had a British accent; London from the sound of it. That answered that question. They were Black Watch.

A curse shot out of the darkness in Harry's general direction. Even without moving, Harry could tell it would miss by several metres to his left. But then another fired off and another after that. Soon the forest was lit by odd flashes of multi-coloured beams of light.

None of the incoming spells were the telltale green of the Killing Curse. 'Guess they want me alive,' he thought.

Then Harry ducked a sickly purple curse that passed over his head and amended his thought recognizing the dark curse. 'Alive, but not in very good shape,' he amended.

Harry fired a pair of Reductos off aiming at the trunks of trees on either side of one of the sources of spellfire. The trunks exploded where the spell hit sending splinters flying in all directions. Screams of shock and pain rang out. Harry remembered reading the old Horatio Hornblower books when he lived in Hogsmeade with Sarah before the war. It was never the cannon balls of the enemy that did the real damage to the crew but the flying splinters of their own ship that killed and maimed sailors and officers alike. And these wizards were learning that again.

The ground in front of Harry erupted as an Earth Elemental was conjured up by one of the attacking wizards. A part of Harry was impressed. It was an impressive feat of Transfiguration. Magic transformed the dirt and rocks into a vaguely humanoid shape that responded to the caster's mental commands. It required concentration and more than a bit of power to maintain. It also allowed its 'master' to see through its eyes.

Harry locked eyes with the Elemental for a brief second before pointing his wand. "Aguamenti!"

A stream of water shot from the tip of the wand to cover the earth conjuring. It seemed to make a soundless roar of anger as the water covered it.

Harry quickly dropped back through the trees towards the Treants whilst dodging spellfire from the approaching wizards. The water wouldn't destroy the conjuring. You would have to almost literally

wash it away to do that. But the water did turn the construct's dirt into mud. Holding together the muddy Earth Elemental required more power and concentration. It was also much slower.

After stumbling about a bit, the Earth Elemental collapsed back into a pile of mud and rock as the wizard released his magical hold.

Harry took shelter behind a normal tree several metres away from the start of the Treant grove and fired of several Blasting Curses and Bludgeoning Hexes back the way he came.

The incoming spells suddenly halted and a nervous darkness settled.

The speaker from earlier called out. "Give it up, Count! You've got nowhere to go! Don't be stupid about it!"

"Oh, he doesn't know me very well at all," Harry muttered. "Of course I'm going to be stupid about it. Just give me a minute."

With a lurch, Harry suddenly jumped up from his hiding place and fired of two quick Reductos before turning and running straight into the heart of the Treant grove. And prayed he was right. Harry was a metre into the grove before he heard the shouts and commotion of the Black Watch wizards rushing after him.

He was another three metres in when the first Treant branch slammed into his shoulder. The blow knocked Harry painfully to the ground. He immediately rolled, narrowly avoiding a second and third blow from the waist-thick branches.

Before a fourth blow could land, Harry the human was gone. In its place was a black free-tailed bat. The bat fluttered out of the way of the fourth blow, throwing itself into a wild evasion scheme as its echolocation tracked the fast moving tree limbs.

Harry had a sudden flashback to Dobby's bludger in Third year but multiplied by ten.

Screams and curses filled the air behind Harry the bat as he exited the other side of the Treant grove. The Treants allowed Harry and his



pursuers far enough into the grove to cut off escape for most of them. Few, if any, of the Black Watch that entered the grove would be emerging from the grove, and none of them would be injury-free.

Harry chanced to fly up over the forest canopy looking for any wizards on brooms keeping watch. Using the bat's natural radar, he only saw one under a Disillusionment Charm hovering over the grove. The rest must have landed to help their comrades.

Dropping back down into the forest, Harry turned south as he flew through the air. Given a bit of time to get clear and onto his broom, Harry reckoned he could be a hundred miles away before Black Watch could even treat their wounded.

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When he thought it was safe, Harry took to his broom and flew southwest. The first place he landed was on the outskirts of Salt Lake City.

He saw no sign of pursuit from the Dark Watch for the first two days. The first day, Harry slept the day through as he recovered from the hours of evasion and fighting. It was food that eventually forced Harry out of his cheap room. He wished he could call on Dobby for some food, but the distance was too far for even an elf to pop.

Harry, dressed as a common labourer, tried to maintain a low profile. Trying to blend in, Harry discovered the odd male joy of wandering around a large home improvement centre filled with tools, lamps, and raw materials and looking at all the different tools and gadgets. Most of them were replaced with simple charms in the Magical world, but there was some primitive joy playing with the drills that Harry couldn't deny.

Late on the second night in the small room in a rather seedy motel Harry's wards alerted him to a number of wizards searching the area. Harry kept his rucksack ready to go and stayed dressed all night, ready to go at a moment's notice. He was confident that his temporary wards would hold under their general search, but he was careful not to allow his confidence turn into arrogance.

--BD--

14 July 1999

The next morning found Harry on the outskirts of San Francisco.

The wards stopped picking up the roaming wizards at three in the morning. Harry waited another hour before slipping out of the motel room. He took off from a small side alley, staying low and trusting his cloak and the predawn darkness to keep hidden.

Once out of the developed area, Harry increased his height and speed. He charted an indirect course for San Francisco. He had spent time in San Francisco during his world tour after his arrival in this time. Harry never made contact with the magical community in the Bay area, but he hoped his rough familiarity with the area would help him hide out.

Besides, he really enjoyed Fisherman's Wharf.

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Blending in to the scenery in San Francisco was rather easy. Even a British Pureblood could probably accomplish it without too much difficulty. Tourists from all over the world made the city a stopping point. The Golden Gate Bridge, the trolleys, Alcatraz Island, and others were huge tourism draws. The diverse accents, clothing and behaviours would have been sufficient in most other place. But 'The City by the Bay' had even more cover.

San Francisco is one of the most liberal, and liberated, cities in the United States. From the 1960's with the Hippies of Haight-Ashbury to the rather flamboyant Castro District, the city was filled with so many different characters, no one commented on a stranger being a bit off. The entire Wizarding population of Britain could come on holiday and not even cause a ripple in Harry's estimate. The most Muggle-ignorant British Pureblood would be able to wander around the city with no more than a casual glance from most of its citizens.

Harry rented a room in the Radisson Hotel just across the street from Fisherman's Wharf. He showered and changed into Muggle standard uniform, a t-shirt proclaiming he was the 'Property of Alcatraz', jeans and trainers. A plain grey sweatshirt completed Harry's disguise. A Notice-Me-Not charm on his rucksack kept anyone from wondering about its presence.

Playing tourist, Harry kept a look out for any sign of Wizarding pursuit. Several times, Harry identified people he thought were wizards or witches but they made no sign of recognizing or even being the least interested in him.

After buying a Muggle fantasy novel, Harry had a very nice dinner in a small Italian restaurant on Pier 39 overlooking the famous sea lions of San Francisco Bay. The large sea mammals just lay about on floating platforms provided for their use. The waitress was a rather attractive young woman with pretty eyes and a rather flirty smile. Harry reckoned she was rather more interested in his tips than in him, but he enjoyed the attention anyhow. For dinner he had a brilliant dish of crab meat with noodles covered in an Alfredo sauce.

The sun was down as a rather full Harry Potter paid his check. The waitress gave him a little wave goodbye as Harry walked out the door. The food sitting in his stomach prompted Harry to take a walk before returning to the warded safety of his hotel room. He needed to burn off some of the meal and being stuck in the hotel rooms was leaving the active wizard with an overabundance of energy. Walking up and down San Francisco's famous hills would be a good way to burn that off.

Harry reached the end of the Fisherman's Wharf area when he first noticed them. Three men were following him. None of them were dressed alike or even looked at one another. Only one was in sight at any given time and only for five minutes at a shot. They rotated being the one with 'eyes-on' Harry. That spoke of professionalism.

It was the professionalism that gave them away. Harry could set his watch by their rotation, and it was always in the same order. That pointed to a very high level of training but not the field experience to

allow for variability in the cycle time or rotation order. The question remained of who they were, Black Watch or Yanks?

Harry waited until a passing bus briefly cut him off from view from his tail. In that brief instant, Harry switched to his bat form and a quick low-level flight into a nearby doorway. Once in the shadows, he returned to his human form. Harry smirked for a moment as he thought about the Muggle movies having the vampire emerge from the shadows.

The tail ran across the street whilst apparently talking to his hand. A flash of reflected street light indicated he was probably using a communications mirror. Harry cursed under his breath. The mirror was probably a standard issue British Ministry of Magic item. American magical agents used charmed earrings; no visual capability like a mirror but stealthier. They lacked the visual capabilities of a mirror, but were very discrete, particularly in Muggle crowds.

Trying to look casual, Harry slipped out of the doorway and back the way he had come until he came to the edge of the building. The small alley between the building and its neighbour was a rather steep upward slope. The two remaining tails appeared together across the street. Harry paused against a building to watch them.

One of the men was carrying what looked like a dowsing rod. There were still Muggles around so the wizard was trying to be discrete. The man started turning in a slow circle whilst holding the Y-shaped stick. He passed Harry's direction for a quarter turn but stopped and slowly started turning back in Harry's direction.

"Bloody hell," Harry cursed under his breath as the wizard nodded in Harry's general direction. "How are they doing that?"

Harry scurried the rest up the way up the alley. Behind him he could hear the wizards start to follow him up the alley. With all of the Muggles around, Harry's options were limited. Flying was out, it would take too much time to pull out his broom, resize it, and cast the Disillusionment Charms needed in the Muggle area.

With a grimace, Harry fell back on plan B. If they were able to track him somehow, running was not an option. He needed to find out how they were tracking him and how many. With a pop, Harry apparated to Golden Gate Park.

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Golden Gate Park is a huge area of parkland on the western edge of the city. The park became famous in the 1960's for protests and concerts. Often the two were one in the same. The park was still famous for its concerts and time-displaced hippies thirty years later.

Harry reappeared on the western edge of the park not far from the polo field. The large field was large enough to hold seven football (soccer) pitches in the centre. During his previous visit to the city, his tour bus had stopped here to allow the tourists to wander the park for a bit. All Harry had thought at the time was it would be a brilliant place to have a Quidditch tournament.

Now the pitches were empty in the early evening darkness. Harry popped into view on the edge of the pitch, close to the tree line.

With no hesitation, Harry strode out to the middle of the huge, flat field. In the centre of the field, Harry removed his rucksack and placed it onto the ground. After a minute of searching the charmed pockets, he pulled out a set of ready-made ward stones, care of his granddaughter, Melissa Prewett and her cousin Bill Weasley. A weak Reducto created a large enough hole about thirty centimetres deep. Harry gently placed the stones into the hole. Then he used his wand to write the triggering rune in the air over the hole. The runes briefly pulled power from Harry as they sprang into existence. A simple Reparo charm returned the dirt into the hole and replaced the damaged grass leaving no visual sign to the ward stones location.

Harry picked up the rucksack and walked a short distance away from the buried ward stones. He pulled his battle robes out and set his rucksack aside. He tapped his glasses with his wand casting a charm to allow him to see magic. Relatively useless in daylight, the charm caused all things magical to glow with an aura. In bright light even a wizard of Dumbledore's calibre would only have a slight shimmer.

The value of the spell came out in low light conditions. It was similar to using a Muggle thermal imager on a cool night. The magic really stands out. Harry pulled on the robes and mentally verified everything was ready. In short order, Harry was standing in the centre of the field, robed and with both wands in his hands, ready for battle.

It took about fifteen minutes before Harry saw the first sign of his pursuers. There were three figures mounted on brooms and cruising about a hundred metres above the city. They seemed to pause before shooting to another position and pausing again. It was only when this happened a third time that Harry realized what they were doing.

They were triangulating on his position.

The glowing figures passed almost directly over Harry. Then they turned and started circling the field. It didn't take long from then to hear the sound of multiple pops as ten glowing figures appeared not far from where Harry originally arrived. Harry wondered if they planned for that distance or if the wards diverted them.

Without a pause, the wizards spread out in a skirmish line and started walking directly towards Harry. They advanced with a good three metres separation between each figure. Harry grudgingly nodded to their trainer. Their line was spread enough that no area effect spell had much chance of getting more than two of them and even then it would be so weak that almost any shield would be able to block it.

The three figures on brooms tried to take advantage of Harry's distraction to dive on him firing spells. Harry dodged the few spells that were on target. Their accuracy was increasing the closer they got. It looked as if they planned on continuing their dive until they were almost on top of Harry.

About thirty-five metres above Harry, the trio suddenly came of an abrupt halt. The three broom riders smashed into an invisible wall. Imagine three Muggle motorcycles running into a granite wall at full speed. Their brooms and bones snapped as they impacted violently.

From Harry's point of view, he couldn't see the injuries in the darkness. He could see the dimming glow of the figures as their magic waned as their bodies weakened. The figures seemed to hover for a moment on the hardened dome, and then slowly start to descend until they suddenly dropped quickly to the ground.

The ward was Melissa's brainchild. It combined an anti-transit ward with another ward that altered the properties of a half-metre thick air boundary in a hemisphere around the ward stones. Water is 'soft' and easy to pass through. But it also doesn't compress, so the faster you hit it, the 'harder' it is. Ask anyone who's done a belly flop how soft the water really is. Melissa's wards prevented the air boundary from compressing when a high speed physical object hit it. A car, bullets, brooms; the faster they hit, the harder the impact.

The ten figures on the ground stopped their advance for a moment in shock at the sudden demise of their brethren. Harry wondered briefly what they were using to see in the darkness.

Harry suddenly noticed a dim spot of light that appeared behind the figures. It was not large enough to be a person. It simply looked like a glowing ball hovering in the air.

The question dropped in priority as the ten started to advance again. Harry started forward towards their advance. He didn't want to get too close to the ward boundary, but he wanted to get them at the disadvantage of crossing the ward line.

"Damn you Potter," a voice growled out. Harry recognized it as the leader in the forest. "You've cost me the better part of half my unit now. I'm going to make you pay for each one of their deaths!"

"You should have taken the hint and left me and my family alone, Watchman," Harry replied. Internally, he was wondering what magic the Watchmen would be using to see in the dark. All of them had their weak points.

Harry and the Watchmen were about ten metres apart when the battle began in earnest. It started with a curse thrown by the last

Watchmen on Harry's left. That was a signal to the others as the other nine fired a rainbow of spells in Harry's direction.

Harry dove to his right as he conjured a low stone wall out of the ground. Several of the curses splashed against the wall causing it to shake. Thinking about the most likely spell the Watchmen were using to see in the dark, Harry rolled onto his back and fired a pair of magical flares up from both wands. The twin magical pulses rocketed up fifty metres before exploding into floating, fiery orbs. The orbs lit the polo pitch like twin mini midday suns.

The Watchmen moaned as the brilliant light sent shafts of pain through their magically light-sensitive eyes. The bright light prevented Harry from seeing magic, but didn't give him any more pain than a normal person would experience walking from the dark into a bright room.

Outnumbered, Harry reacted to the Watchmen's distraction by crossing his summoned wall and charging into the centre of the Watchmen's line.

Their sight was returning to normal as Harry reached the Watchmen. A Bludgeoning Charm almost caught Harry as he closed the last two metres. Harry dove into a roll as one wand snapped out producing a whip of magical energy.

The same magical whip that once removed Morfin Gaunt's head during the Dark Army assault on Hogwarts now arched out to wrap around the thighs of one of the Black Watch wizards. The wizard looked shocked as he dropped to the ground, his legs lying next to him and no longer attached to his body. It took a moment for the pain of the cauterized removal of his legs filtered through the shock.

Harry rolled out of his dive, allowing his momentum to carry him back onto his feet. A Compression Hex clipped his shoulder before his shield could fully form. The Count pointed his wand to return the favour.

“Sagitto toxium!”



The modified Arrow Hex caused three arrows sprung from Harry's wand towards the wizards on his left. The modified spell created smaller than normal arrows but with the paralyzing effects of curare. The first wizard managed to dodge the missiles, but his next two comrades were not as lucky. One arrow caught a Watchman in the stomach. The wizard curled up in sudden agony, dropping to the ground. The other wizard caught two arrows in his right side as he pointed his wand at Harry. The arrows sliced in between his ribs and into his lung. He joined his friend in pain until the paralyzing effects of the spell took effect.

Harry cast a silent Reflecting Charm as the sickly pink coloured Entrail-Expelling Curse approached. The casting wizard let out a scream as the magically returned spell homed in on the wizard. The screams were stopped as the curse took effect.

Four of the ten Watchmen were now out of the fight in the first minute. Now the fight settled into a nasty, brutal effort as the shock of Harry's initial attacks wore off.

The spell energy filled the pitch. Beams of magical light of various hues of the rainbow flashed lighting the area in odd tints. The field's grass was burnt and furrowed as deflected curses and hexes cut, burned, and smashed the innocent lawn.

The last Black Watch wizard dropped to the ground as a Cutting Curse sliced through his wand hand's wrist. A following Stunner ended the man's pain before it really had time to sink in. The Count stood alone in the field. A number of small wounds leaked blood onto his robes. Both wands were held out over the bodies of the apparently unconscious or dead Watchmen.

Harry let out a small sigh at the remains of the fight. No way would the Muggles miss this. He needed to clean it up and leave quickly before the Muggle police could arrive to investigate. But at least now the Watchmen would not be casing after him. A quick transfiguration charm changed the ten living and dead Watchmen into matchboxes.

After another charm to repair the damage to the pitch, Harry started back to where his rucksack still sat. Once he had that he could fly

back to his hotel for some much needed rest. That plan went into the rubbish bin as he summoned the pack.

“You are everything I have heard, Count.”

One of Harry’s wands leapt into his right hand even as his left hand caught the summoned rucksack. Harry pointed the wand in the direction the voice had come from.

“There is no need for that, Count. I am not actually here in a physical sense. More of a projection really.” A quick charm by Harry confirmed the Minister’s astral status.

The speaker appeared in mid-stride several metres from Harry. It was a figure Harry recognized. “Minister Dirk Cresswell, I presume?” Harry asked in a mocking tone.

“The same,” the out-of-body politician agreed. “You have been most elusive for my men to track you down. I was most disappointed in their failure to capture you during the raid on the Potters’ manor. We couldn’t even find a trace of you until you were leaving Scotland.

“I should have expected their failure. After all, they were going up against the legendary Count of the British Unspeakables; the number two Most Wanted wizard on the Dark Army’s Kill On Sight list.”

Harry’s eyes narrowed as he listened to the British Minister of Magic. “How do you know all that?”

Cresswell laughed delightedly. “My father told me.”

“Your father? You’re Muggle-born. How would he know?”

“Mmhmm” the Minister hummed in agreement as he started to pace. “I was rather surprised by the turn of events myself. I was at Hogwarts in Ravenclaw when the dreams began. Rather indistinct at first but they got stronger in time. I started to research what the dreams showed me.”

Cresswell paused and smiled at Harry. "I was shocked when my research started to confirm what the dreams told me. It was enough for me to start acting in the way the dreams suggested." The wizard nodded, mostly to himself. "It was the discovery of who I truly am that confirmed my path."

A thrill ran up Harry's spine. "Who are you?"

"The first part was my mother was an immigrant from Germany just before the war ended. She was a translator and librarian for the British Museum. She met my father and married him soon after arriving in England. Or so I thought.

A lot of research eventually showed that dear old Mum was a witch and she was already expecting when she arrived here. I believe you met her before. She was known as Ingrid Cresswell to me, but you knew her as Serena Raven."

Harry was shocked at the revelation. That meant the Minister was related to both the Krums and the Grangers. "Serena was your mother?"

The Minister smiled at the surprise he had caused. "But it was your return Count that really made things possible."

"Explain"

Cresswell smiled at Harry's demand. "Have you ever wondered about where the magic that made your journey to the past possible came from? Where did the Unspeakables find the knowledge to create the device that Aberforth Dumbledore gave to you come from?"

A feeling of dread came to Harry as he remembered the conversation with Tom when he had 'returned' to this time. "They thought it came from Grindelwald," Harry whispered almost to himself.

"Albert Grindelwald, the most powerful Demon Master in modern history," Cresswell answered with a relish. "He investigated using the Nether Realms to move outside mortal time. His device carried you

though safely across the barrier between worlds and then dropped you back into the mortal world at the targeted time. The device remained in the Nether Realm to pull you back when your time was up.”

A smirk crossed the British Minister’s face. “It was intended to be used to go back and recover knowledge lost when the Demon Lords were suppressed by the Roman wizards two thousand years ago.”

“Why are you telling me this?” Harry asked.

“Because it is thanks to you that all this is possible! When you used the device to go back in time, Grindelwald recognized its passage. He followed its ‘trail’ to the breach you created. From there he was able to reach out to me in my dreams. When you returned he grabbed onto you and was able to slip across the boundary.”

Harry felt his stomach clench. “Grindelwald is alive again?”

“In a manner of speaking. He had no body or magic of his own.” Cresswell shrugged. Then he casually commented, “They say a man lives on in his children.”

“You’re the son of Grindelwald and Serena?”

Cresswell smiled maliciously at Harry. “Yes, it came as a surprise to me as well. I really did want to discuss it with my traitorous aunt before you rescued her.

“Father, of course, didn’t have a body or magic of his own anymore. He came to me and I accepted him into me. Now we are one. I have his knowledge and skills; he has my body and magic.”

“It’s Quirrell-mort all over again,” Harry groaned under his breath.

Oblivious to Harry’s comment, Cresswell continued, “I was looking forward to training her granddaughter as her replacement right in front of her.”

Harry snorted at that. "Hermione is more a replacement for Serena than Christina."

Cresswell seemed to consider that for a moment. "Maybe you're right. You would probably know better than me. Never told me she was a witch at all. If not for my father's dreams, I really would have believed I was a Muggle-born."

"And what does your mother say about your activities now?"

Cresswell shrugged. "Not much of anything, I'm afraid." A slow smile crossed his face. "I'm afraid dear ol' Mum had a bit of an accident three days after I left for Hogwarts at the start of my Second year. Horrible tragedy it was. Walked right in front of a lorry. Did you know that rumour about if you lose a family member during the term you get all O's is actually true?"

Harry was shocked at the Dark Lord in front of him. In a flat, deadly tone, Harry said, "So you killed her just like you had my sons and grandson killed."

"Well, your little clan was the biggest obstacle to my takeover of magical Britain. Between your children's positions, they had way too much sway over the sheep for me to leave them alone in any case. The fact they were your family made it ever so much sweeter."

Harry seethed powerlessly at the image of the Dark Lord that seemed to be standing three metres in front of him. Cresswell smiled as he saw the anger and pain in Harry's face.

"Now, I must be off," the Minister of Magic commented casually. "I know this seems easy, but projecting your image several thousand kilometres is actually quite strenuous. Tracking you was even harder with the scent wearing off."

That caught Harry's attention. "Scent?" Cresswell was obviously a megalomaniac like Grindelwald and Voldemort. Harry wanted to keep him talking as long as possible. Harry could feel his body and magic recovering from his fight. If he could just buy a bit more time.

“You passed through the Neither Realms, silly Count,” Cresswell answered mockingly, unaware of Harry’s thoughts. “Its essence clings to you like a fine perfume. Even running all this way is not enough to escape me.

“But before I go, an old friend wanted to say hello,” Cresswell smiled. “Or should I say an old fiend?”

Cresswell’s image seemed to wave before winking completely out of existence. Harry noticed that the ground where the image’s feet had been now had a fiery ring growing wider. Without turning his back to the ring, Harry started to rapidly back away.

Harry reached the spot where the buried wards were hidden. A quick charm uncovered them. Harry was about to deactivate the wards when a loud whoosh came from the direction of the ring.

The ring was now two metres across with waist high flames. In the centre of the ring a ball of fire was growing. The whoosh came again as the fire ball suddenly doubled in size. Harry quickly deactivated the wards. He could feel them starting to unravel when a loud crack filled the air.

Standing in the centre of the burnt out ring stood a creature at least two metres tall. Harry recognized its vaguely human appearing head that looked like a parody of bull mixed with a wolf. Two curved horns rose out of its skull to curl along the sides of its head with pointed wolf ears rising up on either side of the horns. It turned its canine-like snout and snarled at Harry revealing a mouthful of wickedly sharp looking teeth. Its skin looked blackened and burnt. Large cracks in the skin appeared as the creature walked forward revealing its feet ended in hooves. The creature moved like a squat tank. Its arms and legs were twice as thick as normal human proportions.

Harry felt his stomach clench as he realized it was the same demon he’d faced in Dresden whilst searching for Tom.

The demon held up a clawed hand with two talons raised. Harry got the message.

It was time for round two.

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Remembering the last time, Harry cast a Bubble-Head Charm and a Flame Freezing Charm. The fire protection charm would not provide any help from Hellfire, but it would prevent the normal fires Hellfire ignited from harming Harry. Hellfire was the basis of the Fiendfyre Curse.

He couldn't let this go like last time. That fight reduced Dresden to a smouldering ruin. Sure, the Muggle bombs helped, but the demon's Hellfire made the fire insatiable. Half of San Francisco could be destroyed if this went too long.

Fleeing was not an option either. Cresswell left the creature here with no apparent limits or controls. If Harry didn't stop it, the demon would be free to kill and destroy until the Yank magical LEO could respond. Thousands of people would die first.

Pointing both wands at the creature, Harry yelled, "Aguamenti!" Streams of water as thick as a fire hose surged out of the wand tips. The streams smashed into the demon sending up a hissing cloud of steam.

The steam cloud obscured Harry's vision enough that the ball of Hellfire the demon flung was hidden until it was halfway to Harry. Harry dove out of the way. The heat from the Hellfire singed his trousers as it passed by.

The demon started to advance on Harry. Each step created a grass fire.

"Aguamenti! Fridus! Aguamenti! Fridus!"

From his left wand Harry fired the water stream while the right wand cast a Freezing Charm that encased its target in ice. Countering the

heat created by the demon was Harry's best hope of subduing the creature.

It seemed to be working at first. The ice started to build up in the demon's shoulders and torso.

But then the demon started to glow red and the ice started to melt faster than Harry could create it. Harry realized he was buying time but that was it.

The demon suddenly surged forward and seized Harry in one clawed hand, its talons digging deep into Harry's shoulder. With a careless effort, the demon flung Harry straight up into the air. Harry barely had time to register he was in free-fall when he decent was met with a massive punch to his side as he came down next to the demon. Harry heard a couple ribs snap as the punch threw him to the ground ten metres from the demon.

Harry forced himself up as a bit of blood came up between his lips. He steeled himself for the pain and cast a border-line Dark spell the repaired his ribs. It was considered a border-line spell because of the extreme pain it caused and the amount of power required. It was like having all the pain of the ribs healing naturally all occurring in the same instant. Most wizards would go into coronary shock from the flash of pain.

Pain was familiar enough to Harry that he could fight through the pain, but the power requirement made him feel like he had been fighting for hours. Combined with the fighting he had already done, he was feeling magically exhausted. Time for plan C. Or was he up to H now?

A Summoning Charm brought the rucksack into reach. Fortunately it was protected by fire as the demon-set fires were now engulfing most of the polo pitch. Harry quickly pulled open one of the side pockets and reached in. He pulled out a gleaming silver sword with rubies the size of robin's eggs embedded on the hilt. Just below the hilt of the goblin-made sword was engraved the word Gryffindor.



The demon fired another stream of Hellfire at Harry that he nimbly sidestepped. The beast roared its rage and ran forward again determined to grab Harry again.

Harry's wolf form instincts forced him to dodge low, swinging the sword in a knee high arc back-handed swing. The sword sliced across the back of the demon's knee. The tough hide prevented the sword from completely severing the tendons, but it did weaken them.

Now the demon howled in pain as it 'blood' left a green trail of ichors on the sword's blade. Harry took another swing at the creature's back but was blocked as by the talons on its hand. The demon seemed to smile at Harry as it turned to face him.

They paused for a moment. Suddenly both combatants launched into motion. Harry fought the creature with a flurry of swings of the sword and the creature returned the fight with sweeps of its massive talons.

Harry was bleeding from a dozen relatively minor wounds within a minute. The demon had added a slice across its face and another to a thigh to its collection.

'Damn, this thing's been practicing,' Harry thought.

Getting desperate, Harry allowed himself to drop to one knee after a blow against the sword. Using the momentum, Harry drove Godric's blade up and into the demon's midriff. Summoning the little magical reserve remaining, Harry pushed it into the sword.

"Reducto!"

The Blasting Curse launched the massive demon off the blade, leaving it coated in demon blood.

Harry tried to force himself back up. He needed to strike while the demon was down from him blow, but his legs failed to respond to his demands. Then Harry noticed his vision was going grey around the edges. No, he couldn't pass out!

Rallying a will forged in battle against Voldemort, Harry climbed to his feet and dragged the sword forward towards the prone demon. The creature was trying to keep what passed for its guts inside from the massive hole formed by sword and spell.

Harry raised the sword for a killing blow. The evil creature sneered up its hate at its slayer but Harry detected a hint of respect as well. Too tired to even nod, Harry gave one last blow at the creature's neck. A spray of ichors came out as the blow was not enough to sever the head. It twitched for a couple of minutes as its 'life' ran out on the pitch.

Exhausted, Harry stumbled back through the flames away from the demon's body. After only a few steps he dropped to the ground.

Some movement caught his eye. Looking up, Harry saw three men in black Muggle suits with sunglasses walking casually through the flames. The thought, 'Wizards,' bubbled up through his exhausted brain.

Harry could do nothing as one of the wizards approached Harry and took his sword. His wands were still in their holsters but they were useless as tired as he was.

The suited wizard placed a pin on Harry's shirt and tapped it with his wand. The last thing Harry knew was the familiar belly-button pull of an activating Portkey.

A/N: This was a fun but challenging chapter to write. I almost left you with a cliffie when the demon first appeared, so no complaints about the minor one at the end!

Harry's response to the Watchmen in forest is a paraphrase of Porthos (Oliver Platt) in the 1993 version of *The Three Musketeers*.

I posted a short one-shot called *The Lust of Harry Potter*. Not a serious piece, just a bit of fun. You can find it on my profile page or my Yahoo group.

## Chap 16 – Where the Wild Things Are

Joshua, the representative of the Sasquatch, led Michele and Fleur further into the forest. The thick canopy of trees blocked out most of the light from the moon and the stars, causing the witches to pay close attention as they tried to follow the large humanoid. The other Sasquatches had faded into the night almost as soon as they had left the humans' camp. Fleur hoped they had gone to keep an eye on Harry.

Michele tried to keep one eye on the sky looking for the broom-riding wizards Joshua warned them about. Flashbacks to the werewolf attack on the Hogwarts Express came to Michele as she waited for the wizards to attack. The sudden burst of fire almost, directly in front of her face, almost caused the preteen witch to have heart failure.

“AAAHHHH!”

Fawkes emerged from the ball of fire with a squawk at the sudden burst of sound his arrival caused. The phoenix flew a quick circle around the witches before landing on Michele's shoulder. He let out a small chirp of apology as Michele tried to catch her breath from her fright.

Joshua turned to see the source of screaming. “You must be silent, young cousin. The Dark Ones still lurk above.”

Fleur frowned at the Sasquatch, but before the Veela witch could say anything, Michele said, “I'm sorry. I just scared myself.” Joshua merely nodded and started forward once again.

“Fawkes, is Gramps okay?” Michele asked in a whisper.

The immortal fire bird let out a chirp that somehow conveyed both concern and reassurance. Then he rubbed his head to the girl's cheek in a comforting manner. Without thinking, Michele reached up to scratch the bird.

Fawkes's arrival distracted Michele from her concerns. Michele was a petite girl and balancing the large bird while walking through the dark woods kept her from worrying about the wizards hunting them.

Joshua led the witches to a small stream with an ancient, but sturdy looking bridge crossing it. The stone bridge had an odd, ageless quality about it that spoke of eternity. A rather large, fast moving stream crossed under the bridge. The water bubbled through the many rocks filling the air with a peaceful music.

"We have reached our boundary," Joshua announced as he started across the bridge. "Once across the bridge, nothing of Darkness may harm us or even enter."

"I don't sense any wards," Fleur commented looking around.

Joshua emitted a low rumbling sound Michele suspected was a chuckle. "The very stream itself forms our boundary. The stream completely surrounds our land in a magical loop. The sounds of the water give peace and comfort to those of the Light. The Dark Ones see a raging torrent with no bridge. The thunderous sound of its rapids cause fear in their hearts." Their guide gestured at Fawkes. "It is much like the sound of a Phoenix's cry."

"If Fawkes's cry doesn't hurt Gramps, why would this?" Michele asked with a scowl.

A thoughtful look crossed Joshua's ape-like face. "Truly, I do not know this. The wards felt Harry Potter's approach. We asked a unicorn to approach your camp. Skylar refused to come near your camp while Harry Potter was out of the tent."

Fawkes let loose sound that seemed a snort of derision. Michele grinned for the first time since leaving Harry. "Ya, what he said."

Joshua nodded, "Indeed, friend Fawkes did speak for Harry Potter's inclusion. However the Council felt his arrival would be too disruptive of our peoples."

Michele and Fleur stepped off the bridge and felt a sudden wave cross over them. The sky seemed to lighten to a pleasant early dawn light with a sense of overwhelming peace. Even the air smelled purer.

“I can’t describe it,” Fleur muttered. “It feels like there has never been a moment of violence or conflict.”

“Humans are creatures of conflict and competition,” Joshua commented. “It is few of them that could abide in a place such as this for long. Humans need adversity and challenge to drive them forward. It is in their nature.

“I admit I feel my human blood cry out occasionally for something to do. It is an odd feeling boredom and longing. I often must sit and meditate until the feeling goes away.”

Fleur looked at their ‘host’ and wondered if that was a joke.

The trio lapsed into silence as they continued their walk.

--BD--

Fawkes flew ahead as the three emerged from the forest into a large grassy meadow sitting at the base of a small mountain. The mountain towered above the meadow but it seemed protective rather than crowding the meadow.

“Fleur, look!”

Fleur looked to where Michele was pointing. A small herd of unicorn were grazing nearby. It took Fleur a minute to realize that not all of the equines were unicorns. A number of pegasi were intermixed with the herd; their wings folded tight against their bodies causing them to blend in with the unicorns.

A short distance from the herd a half a dozen small furry animals were playfully wrestling and chasing each other around. Fleur thought they had to be some type of weasel but she’d never heard of weasels that had small horns on top of their heads. The witch blinked as the

mound of wrestling creatures suddenly stopped to look at the two witches en masse. An instant later they all disappeared.

“Did they just go invisible?” Michele asked Joshua. Fleur guessed she’d seen the same thing.

Joshua let out his rumbling chuckle again. “They actually went out of phase with our reality. You can’t detect them or track them now, but they can see and hear us. Fortunately, crumple-horned snorkacks can’t affect anything when they are phased. The little ones are very mischievous even if they are of the Light.”

“Those were crumple-horned snorkacks?” Michele asked in disbelief. “I thought Luna just made them up to get a rise out of Hermione!”

Joshua turned to Michele in surprise. “You’ve heard of snorkacks before?”

“Gramps’s friend talks about them. Her name is Luna Lovegood. She and her father keep going on hunts to find evidence of them in Sweden.”

A thoughtful look crossed Joshua’s face. “I did not know they were known in Man’s world.”

“They’re not,” Fleur admitted in a slightly shocked and distracted tone as she watched where the snorkacks disappeared from. “No one believes the Quibbler when they talk about all kinds of magical creatures no one has ever seen or heard of before. It’s something of a joke, to be honest.”

“I wonder if their other creatures are real too,” Michele wondered.

“I would be interested in seeing this Quibbler,” Joshua commented. “They must have some contact with us in some way.”

Joshua shook his massive shoulders in a shrug. “Come, we can set up your tent just ahead and you may rest.

--BD--

"I feel so much better," Fleur commented as she walked out of her bedroom wrapped in a fluffy white dressing gown acquired at one of their hotel stops. Her long silver blonde hair was still damp from the shower. She paused when she noticed Michele sitting in a nearby chair similarly robed with her knees drawn up to her chest and her arms wrapped around them. Fawkes was perched on the back of the chair sleeping with his head tucked under a wing.

"Are you okay?" the Healer asked.

"I'm worried about Gramps."

Fleur walked over and settled onto the arm of the chair. She started to rub Michele's back with one arm. "If the stories I heard from my grandfather's lover are true, then you have nothing to worry about. Be more worried about anyone that is in his way."

"Huh?"

Fleur sighed. "I did not handle the news that Viktor and I were cousins very well." Michele nodded having been to the dinner in Switzerland.

"When I was told of grandfather's other child and my connection to Viktor, I was very angry. Harry stirred my anger at the conference in Switzerland." Fleur grimaced. "I was not on my best behaviour that night," she admitted. Michele giggled a bit at the memory of that dinner. Gabriella had insisted her older sister's behaviour was because of a crush on Harry.

Unaware of Michele's thoughts, Fleur smiled slightly and continued in a wistful tone. "My mother sent me to the colony in Bulgaria afterwards. I spent a bit of time with Victor's grandmother, Maria, while I was there. She told me much about my Grandfather Claude and his friend the Count. If half the stories I heard from her and since coming to England are true, than I am sure he is fine."

“I know,” Michele admitted quietly. “But I also know Uncle Ron was a great dueller and they killed him. Uncle Mike and father were very good too. I used to sit and watch them practice. The only one that could beat Uncle Ron was Grandpa Tom. I don’t want to lose Gramps too.”

Fawkes let out a song of support and comfort. Fleur found her own fears lift as she listened to the immortal bird.

As the song died down, Fleur smiled her thanks to the phoenix as she stood up. “Come, Michele. Let us get dressed so we may go see our hosts. Harry would want you to concentrate on getting well.”

“I know,” Michele admitted as she rose to follow the older witch. “I have felt better ever since we crossed the bridge.”

Fleur considered that. “It could be the boundary is affecting you. Or it could just be psychological. I will run some checks on you after we have dressed.”

--BD--

The two witches emerged from their tent to find Joshua waiting with another Sasquatch. This one was several centimetres shorter and of a slightly slimmer build. The new Sasquatch was also covered in soft gray and white hair and its face was wrinkled with age.

“Greetings, cousin,” Joshua rumbled with a short, polite bow. “This is our resident Healing Elder, Yo’tel. She will oversee the cleansing of the curse from your blood.”

“Come, ni’chok. We will get started,” Yo’tel commended. Then she turned and started away.

Fleur and Michele exchanged a glance at the female Sasquatch’s abrupt manner. They started to follow as directed. They had only gone several paces when Yo’tel called back over her shoulder. “Only the ni’chok. We do not need anymore of you in our lands.”



Fleur stopped Michele from taking another step forward. "I will not leave Michele alone. I am her Healer and she is my responsibility."

The old female Sasquatch turned and glared at Fleur. Michele noticed Joshua looked ... torn on what to do.

"Her Healer?" Yo'tel commented sneering. "If healed she is, they why bother me? Worthless your healing is."

Fleur pushed her temper back with difficulty. She could feel the Veela in her trying to lash out at the insult. "I cannot Heal her of this," Fleur grudgingly admitted with steel in her voice. "But she is of my Flock and her guardian left her in my care. For both reasons, I will not allow her to be taken from me."

Now Yo'tel turned to glare down at the much smaller witch. "If you want our help you will do it my way!"

Joshua stepped in between the two females. Michele thought that was a rather brave, or stupid, thing to do considering she wanted she wanted to go hide somewhere.

"Yo'tel kin'tch bnitok!" he roared at Yo'tel. Michele didn't know what it meant but it brought the old Sasquatch up short. Joshua glared at her until she dropped her gaze. With a sigh, Yo'tel grunted something that sounded like agreement.

Satisfied, Joshua turned and looked at Fleur. "I understand, forest cousin, your feelings and reasonability. But you are a guest in our lands. Remember that."

"I'm sorry," Fleur responded in a quiet voice. "But I promised Harry I would protect her."

Joshua nodded. "I understand." The large Sasquatch turned and gestured. "Come, we are late for the Gathering."

As Joshua led the two witches and the female Sasquatch further into the Sasquatches' domain, Michele skipped up to walk next to their guide. This left Fleur and Yo'tel trailing behind several paces apart.

After a couple of minutes walking, Michele commented slyly, "You were really brave to get in between those two."

"Yo'tel is a great healer, but does not care much for any outside our forest," Joshua explained. He grunted a chuckle. "She is also my mother's eldest sister and resented her bringing human blood into her family line."

Michele considered this for a moment. "Thank you, Joshua," she simply said.

Joshua glanced down at the much shorter witch. "You are welcome, cousin."

--BD--

Joshua led the small party to a large cave in the base of the mountain. The cave looked natural but centuries of continuous use had worn it to the Sasquatches' needs. Orbs floated in regular intervals around the cave walls providing a warm, steady light. A thick coating of brilliant white sand covered the floor of the cave. A sense of peace and a reverent silence filled the area.

Six Sasquatches stood in a circle in the centre of the cave. Based on their size and build, Fleur guessed that half were males and half were female. No obvious tells gave it away though.

The circle they stood around was magically drawn and glowed a light blue colour. Inside the circle, yellow lines created a symbol Fleur did not recognize from any of her Runes studies. The centre of the rune was a much smaller circle drawn in red.

For the first time since Joshua stopped the argument between Yo'tel and Fleur, the female Sasquatch spoke. "From here, the ni'chok must go alone. You may watch from here, Fleur of the V'eltich with Joshua. This is only a Ritual of Sensing. No chance of harm to the ni'chok"

“What is the Ritual of Sensing?” Fleur asked.

Joshua smiled. “A human might call it a check-up.”

Michele glanced up at Fleur, who after a moments pause, gave her a nod of encouragement.

Yo’tel indicated for Michele to remove her shoes and socks before following her onto the sand. Michele complied quickly and started towards the inner circle.

“It’s warm!” she whispered back to Fleur with a grin.

As Michele walked towards the red circle in the sand, Fleur quietly asked Joshua, “What does the name Yo’tel keeps calling Michele mean?”

“Ni’chok means ‘little child’. Sort of.”

“Sort of?”

“It doesn’t translate very well.” Before Fleur could ask another question, Joshua gestured toward the cave. “They will be starting soon.”

Fleur recognized the attempt to deflect her, but she was more interested in the Ritual than what the female Sasquatch was really calling her young charge.

Yo’tel had joined the other six Sasquatch on the outer circle as Michele stepped into the inner circle. The mystical lines flashed as the two moved into their positions. The red circle at Michele’s feet formed a cylinder of red light that went straight up to the cave roof.

It was indistinct at first, but then Fleur heard the low chanting coming from the Sasquatch in the cave. The chanting was not in-synch but rather an intermixing of rates and tones. As the volume increased it

was like a wall of sound pushing into her. Fleur felt like taking a step back from the force of the sound waves crashing into her.

The sound distracted her at first, but Fleur saw small swirls of light forming in the area between the two circles. Small swirls of light would flare and then fade in the circle. Fleur noticed the swirls were moving in a clock-wise fashion around Michele and staying for longer periods before fading out.

Fleur paid particular attention to Michele. The young witch seemed oblivious to what was going on around her. Michele's eyes were shut and her head was back. Fleur couldn't see her face but Michele's muscles looked relaxed, not in any pain.

For five minutes the sound continued to build. It was like standing at the back of a Muggle jet engine as the lights formed a tornado of colours in the circle. It reached a point where Michele was almost completely obscured by the lights. Fleur had never seen a display of magic like this.

Abruptly the sound and lights came to a sense-jarring halt. The silence was deafening and the sudden loss of the lights seemed to cast everything in a shadow until Fleur's eyes and ears started to adjust.

When Fleur could focus again, she noted that the seven Sasquatch were slumped slightly in exhaustion. Michele was looking around with a curious expression on her face.

"We are done," Yo'tel announced as she turned from the circle. The other Sasquatch followed her out of the cave and into the field where Fleur and Joshua had watched.

Michele frowned at Fleur and shrugged. The young witch followed them out and asked, "Why didn't they do anything?"

"Michele, you stood there for several minutes," Fleur assured her. "Didn't you see or hear any of it?"

“Several minutes?” Michele asked in shock. “I barely stopped in the circle before they said it was over.”

“It is an effect of the Ritual of Sensing,” Joshua explained. “Come, we will hear what the Elders have to say.”

--BD--

The two part-Veelas followed the small group of Sasquatches into the centre of the sun-filled field. The Sasquatches settled onto the ground with their legs folded up underneath. Fleur tried to mimic them but found it to be very uncomfortable.

“We have completed the Ritual of Sensing,” Yo’tel started without preamble. “The Curse of Bangelmesh does run through your veins. Your V’eltich blood fights it but it is a fight that will destroy your body no matter who wins.”

Fleur thought the Sasquatch Elder looked smug at that pronouncement.

Yo’tel added, “The Peoples blood in you is strong through your mother.” She glanced at Joshua. “I may disapprove of the fact it occurred, but I cannot deny the line of Anned is soul strong. It refuses to bow to either and seeks to convert the Curse into something else.”

Fleur was trying to understand all of what that meant. She had assumptions but felt she was missing too much.

Apparently Michele felt the same way. “What is the Curse of Banglemesh? Do you mean Lycanthropy?”

The Elders looked mildly surprised. “Don’t humans study their own history anymore?” one asked.

“I’ve never heard Lycanthropy called that before,” Fleur admitted. “We do know it is a curse though.”

The Elder that spoke nodded. "Short lived races often forget what came before," he said in a mournful fashion. "I am Bri'nt, Elder of Knowledge for the People. Hear my words.

"Centuries ago, when man was new and the People still walked openly there was a wizard in the city of Ur. Banglemesh was a powerful wizard. Kings and Emperors sought his services in the creation of protections for the burial sites and palaces. In that time and place, he was the strongest magical human. By the morals of his time, he was a good wizard. But Darkness and Light to humans is often decided by what king one supports and who that king calls enemy.

"The wands of magical humans of today were unknown then. Most used staves and amulets for their spells. These were weak and inaccurate. Humans used rituals in groups to magnify their magic. A human ritual of five prepared wizards could turn entire armies of the day.

"Of these Banglemesh was the strongest. From the wizards of Lower Egypt he learnt the way of changing his form to that of a wolf. Banglemesh enjoyed this form and often used it for his travels; only assuming human form as he approached a human settlement.

"Banglemesh was at his peak when he travelled east to the city known as Media. The wolf in him enjoyed the night. A full moon filled the sky. His enjoyment distracted Banglemesh from paying attention to his surroundings.

"A group of hunters were searching for a wolf that had just taken one of their sheep. By the moon's light they saw a wolf cross the crest of a hill. They attacked Banglemesh before he realized any humans were nearby. Their arrows pierced him before Banglemesh knew of their presence.

"The wizard knew he was doomed and raged against his fate. When one of the hunters came too close he lashed out and bit the hunter.

With his dying, raging thoughts, he poured all his anger and magic into the bite.

“The hunter’s friends carried him home on a sled made of two long poles with Banglemesh’s pelt stretched out between. The hunter seemed to heal quickly and the villagers celebrated the death of the wolf that feed on their sheep.

“The hunter was well for the next cycle. When next the full moon rose, the wolf returned to take his revenge. No one in the village was safe from the wolf’s rage. The next morning, the hunter woke to find his village destroyed. Only the man’s own new-born son was spared by the wolf. Confused, the man took his infant son and ran off to another village looking for shelter from the raiders that slaughtered his village whilst he slept. At the next cycle, it happened again. The hunter left his son and took to wandering the wilderness to keep from killing when his change came.

“Some of the villagers survived the wolf’s attacks and in time they too turned into the wolf. Thus was the Curse of Banglemesh born.”

Fleur and Michele were shocked hearing the story. “Is that all true?” Fleur asked.

“It is indeed,” Bri’nt confirmed. “The Cursed-one took refuge with a small group of the People for a time many years later. The hunter had heard about the disappearance of a great wizard that could change into a wolf. In an effort to find a cure, the hunter travelled to Banglemesh’s House. Banglemesh’s kin tried to kill him for killing their Family Head. The hunter fled, only his curse given strength keeping him from dying from his wounds.”

“What happened to his son?” Michele asked.

Bri’nt shrugged. “The hunter did not know. He was an old man when he came to the People’s camp.”

Michele nodded. “What was the hunter’s name?”

“He never gave his True Name. He was only known as Wolf.”

“Enough,” Yo’tel interrupted. “History may come later. Ni’chok, your father’s line has the power of the change of shape, yes?”

“Gramps is actually a wolf and a bat. Grandpa is a mongoose. My father was a beagle animagus.”

Bri’nt looked interested in the existence of another wolf animagus but Yo’tel never gave him a chance to ask.

“If your human magic has the ability, we can tie it to your bloodlines of the People. Your human magic will invoke your heritage. You will no longer have an animal form, but will change to be in a member of the People.”

“That’s not possible!” Fleur protested. “Becoming an animagus takes a lot of time and discipline. Michele doesn’t have the magical understanding to do that!” Fleur paused. “And what about her Veela heritage?”

Yo’tel waved the protest away. “Her magic will know what to do. She will not need to learn a new form for this one is already in her blood. In the form of the People, the Curse will disappear. Banglemesh only cursed humans, not other life forms. The V’eltich blood is not important to this matter and will not be called forth.

“The full moon is two nights from now. If we do not perform the ritual by then it will be too late. The ni’chok will be doomed.”

That pulled Fleur up short. “Are you sure your ritual can do this?”

Yo’tel shrugged in a rather uncaring fashion. “It works or she dies. No other option. Tomorrow night. Rest for the night, girl.”

Fleur pulled a very scared looking Michele into a hug. For the first time since the attack on the Express, Michele truly felt the weight of her own mortality; a very scary thing for a young girl just twelve years old.



The Sasquatch Elders wandered away leaving Fleur holding Michele with only Joshua and Bri'nt remaining.

“ I do not understand why Yo'tel is acting this way,” Bri'nt commented in an absent tone. She is usually the most empathic Healer I have ever met.”

Joshua ignored his comment. To the two witches he asked, “Would you care for a tour of our village and the area?”

Fleur opened her mouth to answer but stopped when Fawkes swooped in and landed on Joshua's shoulder. The phoenix sang out a pure song of happiness and support. Michele summoned up the strength to look up as the song hit her and gave Fawkes a smile of thanks.

When Fawkes finished, Joshua asked, “Shall we tour the village?”

Fleur was going to decline, but Michele piped up. “Yes, please. I would love to see your village. Can you tell me about my mother as we walk?”

The two Sasquatches led the way down a path around the mountain. After twenty minutes of walking, Joshua led them up the side of the mountain. Ahead of them Fleur could see a cave mouth. It was much smaller than the one used for the ritual, but wide enough for three Sasquatch to walk side by side.

As they approached the cave, Joshua explained. “Ages ago, the trees towered over the land. The People first came to understanding living amongst the tops of the great trees. The Mother was warm and very wet. This was before Man came into awareness. The Mother changed and dried and cooled. The great trees died. Only the smaller species survived as the great walls of ice advanced.

“The People moved down from the trees with heavy hearts. We moved into the caves to keep warm. With no great trees we remain there still until the Mother turns warm and wet again.”

Fleur and Michele were still trying to understand the context of what they had been told when Joshua turned and descended into the cave.

They only walked what felt like fifty metres when the passage opened up to a huge cavern. The ceiling extended up in a great dome. A shining artificial sun bathed the cavern in a warm light. Fleur could feel the heat from the 'sun'. It reminded her of the sunshine around Beauxbatons in the south of France.

The floor of the cavern was a small lush forest of trees and bushes. It reminded Fleur of a rain forest she had seen on holiday to Africa once. She could see dotted through the forest stood simple wooden huts. Although they were Sasquatch-sized, the huts were very basic and did not appear warm at all. Fleur knew that the area did see a lot of snow and cold temperatures come winter.

When the Veela Healer asked Joshua, he shrugged. "Our cave here is very warm. Our huts exist solely for storage and to keep the rain off our heads whilst we sleep."

"Rain?" Michele asked. "We're in a cave."

"Water from a nearby spring is magically sprayed down on a regular basis," Joshua explained. The Sasquatch made a facial expression that Fleur took to be a grin. "We are blessed that we can schedule our 'rain'. It keeps us from having any important celebrations washed out." Michele giggled at his comment.

Several new Sasquatch were seen going about their daily lives. The often stopped to watch the two human females passing by with undisguised curiosity. Unlike the rather hostile Yo'tel, these Sasquatches seemed very relaxed and open.

Fleur and Michele noticed that unicorns, pegasi and phoenixes were moving freely about the cavern. Including Fawkes, Michele counted five phoenixes. One of her Magical Creatures books back home theorized that only one phoenix existed and its colours changed over

the centuries causing people to think there were more of them. Michele could disprove that theory right now.

Fawkes and the other phoenixes were flying about in a complex game of what looked like tag or a five way Seeker Quidditch battle; except these 'Seekers' were bursting into flames and 'jumping' about trying to get the drop on each other. The three were surprised when one of the phoenixes flew down at them in a sudden dive. The bird pulled up and seemed to hover for a moment in front of them before bursting into a ball of fire.

Their guide was very surprised by that behaviour. "I have never seen one of the phoenixes do that," Joshua admitted.

"What was her name?" Michele asked.

"Only the one you call Fawkes has ever been Joined. It is only right that only a Joined partner can give a phoenix a mortal name, so these others have no name as we would know them."

Joshua led them to a hut near one of the cavern walls. Another adult Sasquatch was there preparing some food. Three juvenile Sasquatches were sitting nearby and playing a game.

"Cousins," Joshua started, "this is my mate, "She'lata."

The female Sasquatch smiled at them from her sitting position. Sitting down she was as tall as Fleur.

"Welcome to our home," She'lata said in a heavy accent. She gestured at one of the young Sasquatch and "This is my son, N'tioc and his friends, An'toc and Cio'lic. Please join us for lunch."

"Thank you," Fleur replied politely. "We appreciate your invitation."

Michele sat down next to the three young Sasquatches. The one she thought was N'tioc asked, "You are of the line of Anned too?" His accent was much clearer than his mother's.

Michele nodded. "So Joshua tells me."

N'tioc leaned in and sniffed at her. "Hmm. You seem rather tiny and bald to be a Sasquatch," he commented in a dry tone.

"You remind me of one of my old teddy bears," Michele answered in the same way. That was met with hooting laughter from the three boys.

"Her, I like," one of the boys said. Michele thought it was An'toc.

"Not bad for a thin-skin relative of this fi'sik!" the other agreed.

That started an insult war between the three boys that they happily included Michele in. Everything seemed to be fair game. The more vile the insult the louder the boys hooted their laughter. Michele didn't know them or their people well enough to really get in any good insults but that didn't seem to matter to the boys. It reminded Michele of watching the Potter twins do battle with the Weasley twins. It felt almost like home.

The three adults ignored the four children and their comments. It was a pleasant way to pass the lunch time. Fleur asked some questions about the Sasquatches and how they lived. She'lata did not speak much English, but she and Fleur muddled through it.

When the lunch finished, Fawkes arrived with a guest of his own. It was the phoenix from the path. The pair of phoenixes landed on a nearby railing with welcoming trills of song. Now that it was not a blur of motion, they could see this phoenix had the same red and gold colouring of Fawkes but with white and green tips to her wing feathers. The new phoenix was also about a quarter of Fawkes's size.

"Hello, Fawkes." Michele greeted him. "Who's your friend?"

The two fire birds glanced at each other and then the new phoenix turned to stare directly at Michele. The human and the phoenix locked gazes and neither moved a muscle. Fleur and the Sasquatches could only watch what was happening.

“Michele, are you okay?” Fleur asked. The younger witch’s sudden stillness was making her nervous.

Abruptly, the smaller phoenix burst into a deep, rich song of joy and discovery. It flew over to Michele and landed on her shoulder. The phoenix butted its head into Michele’s as it continued to sing. Michele turned to gaze at the bird on her shoulder with her mouth open wide in shock. The phoenix turned its head and dropped a single tear into the girl’s open mouth.

Michele blinked hard and closed her mouth. The phoenix started to sing again but this time was joined by Fawkes and the other four phoenixes they had seen before flying in the cavern.

After a second, Michele blinked and turned to where Fleur now crouched down next to her. Funny, she didn’t remember Fleur moving.

“Her name is Brighid.”

--BD--

Brighid the phoenix interrupted the rest of their planned tour. Fleur and Joshua decided they would return to the tent. Curious, N’tioc and his friends decided to tag along.

The phoenix was acting like a puppy. Or maybe a better view would be a child with a new puppy. The phoenix would fly excitedly around only to suddenly reappear on Michele’s shoulder, slamming her head happily into her human’s. Fawkes seemed to find Brighid’s behaviour vastly amusing.

After the sixth phoenix head-butt, Michele laughingly protested, “Brighid, stop it!”

Brighid started to chatter and carry on happily from her shoulder. Then she took a nibble on Michele’s ear before flashing off to fly again.

“Cheeky bird,” Michele muttered as Fawkes chattered a laugh overhead. “You are too!” Michele hollered up at him.

“Can you really understand them?” Fleur asked.

“No, but I can get a sense of what Brighid means.”

“Why Brighid?”

“I was reading an old book on the Celtic Gods and Goddesses when I was recovering at Gramps house. Brighid, or Brigit, was a fire goddess of healing and smith crafting. The Christians later made her St. Brigit. But I like the older way of saying it.”

Fleur nodded. “That seems appropriate.”

Michele snickered. “So much for the idea that all werewolves are Dark Creatures.”

Fleur smiled. “Well, hopefully you won’t be a werewolf when we get back to England.”

--BD--

The moon was rising over the forest as Michele and Fleur once again followed Joshua and Yo’tel towards the ritual site for the Ritual of Joining. Fawkes and Brighid flew overhead on their walk to the cave. Michele wore only a plain black robe. If the ritual was successful, her body would grow too large for normal clothing to expand with and Michele flat out refused Joshua’s suggestion she do the ritual naked.

Michele had spent her day with her new friends while watching Brighid and Fawkes fly around. The young Sasquatches had very little understanding of the human world. Michele would tell stories about her life and the three Sasquatches returned the favour. Michele particularly enjoyed hearing about her mother who had been one of their early teachers.

Fleur was happy that the young Sasquatches and Brighid had kept Michele's attention diverted. Merlin knew she was enough of a wreck for both of them.

The cave was just as before with the white sand and the magical circles. Fleur noticed that the symbol inside the circles was now very different. It was much more complex, almost as if several runes had been written over top of one another.

Without a word, Yo'tel moved to her position. Fleur gave the younger witch a quick hug of support before allowing her to move to the centre circle. Fawkes and Brighid landed on Fleur's shoulders and sang a supportive tune.

Michele paused at the circle edge to glance back at the three. Fleur could see the fear in the younger witch's eyes, but also a complete determination to move forward.

After Michele turned back to the circle, Fleur thought, 'Harry and her father would be so proud of her right now.'

--BD--

As the chanting started to pick up pace, Michele was very aware of it around her this time. She felt magic swirling around her. It felt like she was in the centre of a vortex and she was spinning around and around.

It started as a dull ache. Michele could feel an odd pain radiating out from her chest to all the parts of her body. Liquid fire was running through her veins. It felt like all the cells in her body were burning.

Michele could distinctly feel three forces at war in her body. It was not a feeling she would ever be able to truly describe. The best way she could describe it, would be compare it to a great battle between three armies in total darkness. You know a battle is being fought. You can hear and sense the movement around you, smell the copper smell of spilt blood, but never be able to tell how it was fought or who was winning.

Two of the sides seemed to join forces. This was the first time Michele had an idea of which side was the Curse. Understanding came to Michele to identify the human and Sasquatch influences. The human and Sasquatch forces pushed the Curse back. The Sasquatch seemed to take the lead with the human force supporting it.

Michele could feel the Curse teetering on the brink of collapse. Hope welled up in her that this would soon be over.

But the wolf would not rollover so easily. With a final push it seemed to leap out at her.

--BD--

Awareness of her surroundings seemed to slowly flow back.

Michele opened her eyes to see the ground was much further away then she remembered it being. She felt ... powerful. Her body urged her to run and hunt.

“Oh, Merlin! What have they done?!”

Michele recognized Fleur’s voice and turned towards the source. The Veela Healer was standing several metres away with Joshua and the two phoenixes on the Healer’s shoulders. A part of her brain noticed that Joshua now seemed to be just a bit taller than Michele. But it was the horrified and shocked expression that filled Fleur’s face that caught her attention.

‘What was wrong?’ Michele wondered.

She looked down and raised her hands up. The robe she was wearing was now really short and barely came down to her elbows. Her forearms were covered in thick black fur. Her hands ended in claws.

For a moment her mind froze up.

‘Claws?’



‘I have claws?’

Michele turned to Fleur and asked, “What happened to me?”

Or rather she tried to ask. It came out as a series of whines and snarls.

That scared the young girl even more.

Fleur slowly drew her wand and conjured a mirror floating in the air in front of Michele.

Michele looked in to the mirror in stunned disbelief. Through her shock only one thought came through.

‘Oh, I really Pottered this one!’

--BD--

Fleur watched nervously as the Ritual of Joining got underway. Brigid sang a soft, worried song as they watched the ritual start.

The ritual looked much like the previous ritual. The chanting was different than before, more in synch. It was also rather ... aggressive in its tone.

Fleur was startled when Michele started to rise up off the ground and her body started to turn in slow circles. Michele seemed to be aware but not really conscious.

The change started slowly. Michele’s body started to grow. The tiny girl seemed to simply grow larger. It was a proportionate change so at first Fleur thought it was a trick of the light. Then thick brown hair started to cover her body. With each passing second, Fleur could see the change from human to Sasquatch occurring.

‘It’s working,’ Fleur thought to herself in renewed hope.

That was when things started to go wrong.

Michele threw her head back as a jolt seemed to rattle her body. The soft brown hair covering her body started to coarsen and turn black. Her legs seemed to change as her feet started to grow. Her ankle started to migrate up her leg until it resembled a dog's leg.

Fleur pulled her eyes up and saw a change going on in Michele's face. The ape-like facial features of the Sasquatch were changing. A muzzle was starting to project from Michele's face. Fleur could see a mouthful of sharp teeth coming into place. Her ears were also starting to move up and change.

Involuntarily, Fleur took a step back in pure shock. Something had gone spectacularly wrong. Michele now looked like a Muggle movie version of a werewolf.

Fleur had no idea what to do. Around her the Sasquatch Elders and Joshua were just as shocked. Never in their worst nightmares had they thought this was even a remote possibility. Everything they knew about magic said this was impossible.

The only problem was it was happening right in front of them.

Fleur saw the creature that was Michele open her eyes. It caused Fleur to finally find her voice, "Oh, Merlin! What have they done?!"

The wolf-creature turned to look down at Fleur. The Healer in Fleur noted the look of intelligence and confusion in the creature's eyes. That was somewhat reassuring. It meant Michele was still in control.

Michele let out a growling whine. Shock crossed the creature's face at the noise. Michele looked down at what her body had become. She looked up at Fleur with a look of what could only be shock on the wolf-like face.

Fleur carefully pulled out her wand and cast a simple mirror conjuring spell. She felt like crying at the expression on the giant creature's face.

The creature dropped to its knees as it stared at itself in the mirror. Fleur forced herself to put her wand away and take a step forward.

“Michele?”

Michele the wolf-creature looked up at her. She let out an odd barking sound. When she did it again Fleur realized what it was.

She was laughing.

“Michele, think about your human form,” Fleur instructed her.

Michele cocked her head at Fleur. A look of concentration came to the wolf-like face. Nothing happened until Brighid let loose a stream of musical song.

The creature’s body seemed to shimmer for a moment. Michele’s body returned to its normal size.

The young girl looked shocked and worn-out. She gave Fleur a wan smile and said, “Wait till the boys start bragging about the animagus forms again. I’ve got them all beat.”

That said, Michele dropped to the ground unconscious.

--BD--

What followed was a Veela-sized tantrum combined with Madam Pomfrey’s dictatorial Healer authority.

In short order, the relatively tiny Fleur had the Sasquatch Elders and Joshua running to obey her demands. Joshua was ordered to carry the unconscious form of Michele back to their tent as quickly and carefully as possible. Yo’tel tried to balk at Fleur’s directions but the young Healer quickly took her to task on how messed up the ritual had gone.

“This is impossible!” Yo’tel insisted. “The Curse and the Sasquatch blood cannot exist together!” Fawkes let loose a laughing burst of song at that.

“We must test the child to ensure she is still of the Light,” Bri’nt commented.

That earned him a glare too. “Do you remember how Michele got her form back? Without Brighid’s song, she was stuck. The song didn’t hurt her, it helped her!”

“So it did,” the Sasquatch Elder agreed with a look of surprise. “Hm, please excuse me. I have to go check my notes.”

“Now, we are taking Michele back to her bed. Once she is warm and comfortable, we can try to figure out what went wrong.”

Fleur and the remaining Elders followed Joshua back to the witches’ tent. Yo’tel and the Elders carried an argument back and forth the whole way in their native tongue. Fleur was too preoccupied to care what they were saying. She just wanted to make sure Michele was safe.

Joshua quickly carried Michele straight into the tent. The others stayed outside as the human tent was not tall enough for them to stand in comfortably. Once Joshua placed Michele into her bed, Fleur sent him out of the tent. The Healer removed Michele’s now torn and dirty robe and covered her with a magical self-regulating blanket. It would warm Michele if she was cold but also would cool her if a fever hit.

Satisfied to her patient’s comfort, Fleur pulled out her wand and cast, “Lychanus.”

A werewolf hit with the diagnostic charm would radiate a yellow glow. A human infected with Lycanthropy but not yet changed emitted an orange light. A normal human would have no reaction at all. Michele was a very faint light green.

Fleur was confused. She had no idea what that meant. They had four days to discover what this had happened and the ramifications before they had to meet Harry. She hoped they had some real answers by then.

## Chapter 17 – The Rock

16 July 1999

Harry woke up and experienced a horrible feeling of déjà-vu.

After fighting a demon, Harry was, once again, waking up to the unmistakable smells of burn ointments and antiseptics. Of course the last time it had been Muggle German medicines and now it was modern magical potions, but for some evil reason the smells remained remarkably consistent.

After far too many trips to hospital wards, Harry had developed his own mental checklist for 'when waking up in a strange place and you weren't really sure how you got there'. It was actually rather depressing to him that it still happened often enough that he needed it. A quick run through of his senses, magical core, and limbs revealed nothing missing or even seriously damaged. Apparently whoever had taken him had done a good job of patching him up after fighting a unit of Black Watch and a demon.

That last thought almost made Harry smile. Who else but Harry James Potter could have that last thought and consider it a 'normal' occurrence?

Harry cracked an eye to see where he was. The last thing he remembered was a trio of wizards approaching through the flames. A quick peek told Harry he was apparently alone in the room. That didn't rule out invisibility cloaks, disillusionment or monitoring charms but it was something. Harry glanced down at the thin-looking chain that bound him to the bed's railing. He recognized it as a standard magic-suppression shackle used by most magical LEO's.

Now he took a better look around the room. It appeared to be a normal room that one would find in any magical hospital. It even felt like a room at St. Mungos.

Except for the thick metal bars on the windows.

Outside the window, Harry could see the decaying remains of a cement building and beyond that what looked like a lighthouse. Harry guessed the Yanks were hiding their hospital in an old warehouse district or near a port area. Nothing else in the room or out the window gave any other indication on where he was being held.

Harry spent the next thirty minutes trying to figure out his next step. His attempts at wandless magic had produced nothing and all of the magical gadgets the Fred and George had provided had been taken along with his clothes. All he had on was one of those evil hospital gowns with the back opened up.

It was almost a relief when the sole door to the room opened up to admit two FBMI agents in their trademark black suits, starched white shirts, black ties, and even blacker sunglasses. One of the men closed the door behind them and assumed an 'at-rest' posture just inside the room.

The second man approached Harry but stopped just beyond any possible reach Harry could have made. Harry noted the man was a bit shorter than him with thinning hair and a receding hairline.

"Ah, good morning, Mr. Teach," FBMI agent number two offered. Harry noticed he seemed to draw out his words. It was a bit creepy; almost to Ollivander's level. "Although I don't believe that is your real name."

"What is the date?" Harry asked.

The agent reached over and touched one of a pair of runes embedded on the wall. Harry was surprised when the bed transfigured itself into a hard chair with a plain, utilitarian table in front of him.

"The 16th," Agent Two said as he sat down in the chair that appeared opposite Harry. "I am Agent Jones. You may have noticed but wand and wandless magic will not work in this room. Now, let's start with your real name."

‘That explains the use of runes for the transfiguration,’ Harry thought. Aloud he asked, “Why am I being held here?”

Agent Jones gave him a creepy smile. “We can start with you illegally entering the country with two females that now seem to be missing. Or we can talk about the destruction of a large chunk of Golden Gate Park with thirteen dead wizards fried to a crisp. Where would you like to start?”

“Where am I?” Harry asked instead, trying to buy time to think.

“You choose a rather convenient place for us to capture you. You were only a short distance from the primary magical prison in the United States. Welcome to Isla de los Alcatraces; the Island of the Pelicans.”

Harry felt his eyebrows involuntarily rise up as he remembered his time here as a tourist. “I’m on Alcatraz?”

The creepy smile grew a bit wider. “Indeed.”

“Does he work on the whole creepy agent thing or does it just come naturally to him?” Harry asked the unnamed agent by the door. The wizard never even moved a muscle.

“Do you know the penalty for raising a demon in the United States?” Agent Jones asked.

Harry let out a frustrated sigh. “I didn’t raise it, I fought it. The dead wizards were the minions of the stupid git that did raise it.”

Jones gave Harry a disbelieving frown. “According to our ME, all of the bodies we could identify belonged to the British Ministry’s Black Watch and were here legally to assist in the apprehension of a terrorist; one Harry James Potter.” A smirk crossed the Agent’s lips. “It seems to me, Mr. Potter, that it makes much more sense that you are the one that raised the demon.”



Internally, Harry winced at both the identification and the accusation. From an outsider's point of view, that was a very logical conclusion.

Harry forced himself to casually shrug. "Unless you are aware that Cresswell is the son of Grindelwald." That little bombshell caused a crack in both agents stoic demeanour for a moment.

"You are accusing the British Minister of Magic of being a Dark Lord?" Jones scoffed.

"Why not?" Harry retorted. "He is accusing me of causing his predecessor and the entire Potter clan with going Dark. He launched a strike at the Potters that caused the death of Ron, Michael and Jonas Potter in addition to the arrest of Tom Potter-Evans and Bellatrix Potter."

Agent Jones unconsciously leaned back from Harry. The anger and leashed violence in Harry's voice made the wizard forget that magic was impossible in the room and Harry was still secured to the chair.

"What is your proof?" Jones asked. His voice seemed to insinuate that Harry had none.

"My memories," Harry replied. "Cresswell was in that park to summon the demon through some kind of astral projection. We talked before he sicked the demon on me."

"Why would he be willing to talk to you and incriminate himself?"

"Personally, I think Dark magic rots your brain and leaves you a megalomaniac with delusions of adequacy. The more Dark magic you use the worse it gets. I guess that counter-balances the complete lack of morals or restraint."

Harry paused a moment. Then he added, "Plus he really expected the demon to kill me this time."

"This time?" Jones sneered. "You've fought it before?"

“Yes.”

“Ask him when and where,” a voice boomed through the room.

“Ah, we have visitors,” Harry commented idly.

“Answer the question,” Jones insisted.

“Not many people know about that incident,” Harry observed. “The answer will only mean anything to a handful of people. The incident was never reported outside a very tight circle.” A suspicion set in Harry’s mind.

“Okay. It was July 1943 in Hamburg, Germany.” Harry looked at the wall behind Jones’s head. “Do you want to come in here now, Mad-Eye? It would be much more comfortable then talking through a wall.”

Agent Jones scowled at Harry’s comment. “This is an investigation by the United States Federal Bureau of Magical Investigation. British Aurors have no jurisdiction here.”

The door opened to admit a scowling Alsator “Mad-Eye” Moody. “No, but you’ll take my help when ya get your pecker in a vice!”

Harry laughed at Moody’s entrance. “Hello, Mad-Eye. Been a long time.”

Moody stomped into the room and glared down at Harry. “I am not sure you are who you claim.”

Jones seemed to do a double take behind his glasses. “He hasn’t claimed to be anyone.”

“Oh, yes the laddie did. He claimed a great deal.”

Harry couldn’t prevent the smirk that crossed his lips. “You’re not still angry over the way I picked on you at that first training session I did for the Ministry, are you?”

The reminder brought an even deeper scowl to Moody's face. "That was James Evans that taught that class."

Harry nodded. "And it was the same man that dropped the spare wands into the Dachau prison camp cell where you ended up after that Ministry raid early in the war."

The scowl eased up a fraction. "Not many people left today would tie James Evans with the Count."

Harry smiled. "The last time I saw you, before I left to rescue my son from Grindelwald, was in Dippet's office when I pretended to be the Count pretending to be Professor Evans."

Mad-Eye Moody's two good eyes widened at that reminder. But then a smirk appeared on his face. "It didn't take me long to figure out the Count and James Evans were one in the same, laddie. But that doesn't explain how a young lad like yourself can be knowing the things you do."

Harry grinned at the retired English Master Auror. "Moody, you're a fraud. You had your suspicions on who I am for a while now or you wouldn't be here."

The older wizard nodded. "I saw your fight busting young Tom and Bella out of the Ministry. Your style was rather recognizable."

Jones interrupted in protest, "Alastor, do you really expect me to believe this man is the Count? The man would have to be eighty years old by now! This kid isn't over twenty-one!"

"Physically, I'm about that," Harry cheerfully agreed. "Age wise I'm closer to thirty-one."

"You can't travel forward in time," Agent Jones growled.

"Err, kind of," Harry hedged. "I travelled back from this time, spent ten years there and then returned to almost a year before I left."

Seeing the look of disbelief on the faces of Moody and the two agents, Harry muttered, "It's a really long story."

Moody walked over to the rune on the wall and pressed it to create another chair. He sat down next to Jones and considered Harry for a moment.

"Alright, for now I'll accept you are who ya claim to be." Moody put his hand on Jones's arm when he started to protest. "I'll accept your claims, Mr. Potter, but I want to know what the bloody hell is going on in my country."

Harry levelled a serious look directly into Moody's eyes. "The short version is Creswell is sharing body space with the damned soul of his Dark Lord father and has a vendetta against the Potter family and me in particular. He wants to claim Britain as his own, destroy all the Potters, and unleash Hell on Earth. That is what is going on."

Something in Harry's calm, confident statement must have reached the American agent. Jones pushed back a bit from the table as he considered Harry. After a moment he said, "I need to bring in some of my superiors. This one is above my pay-grade. It will take a day or two for me to get everyone I need together." He paused and glanced at Moody; then added, "If you are willing to give me an oath that you will not try to leave these grounds, you can be moved to guest quarters. Otherwise you will be held here."

Harry turned to Moody with a question on his face. The retired Auror nodded his agreement. With a shrug Harry said, "I will agree with the understanding I am on a timetable. I am supposed to meet someone in two days."

"Would that be young Michele and the woman you were travelling with?" Moody asked.

Harry nodded. "When the Express was attacked, one of the werewolves bit her." Moody looked shocked and ill. Harry had to remind himself that this Moody had known Tom and the other Potters

for decades. Ron Potter was even a trainee under Senior Auror Moody.

“Michele has some non-human blood that has been fighting the infection,” Harry explained. “We were looking for a cure, or at least a way to keep it from killing her.”

Agent Jones stood up from his chair. “I will go put in the request right now and make sure they know it has priority. Hopefully we will hear something tonight. Moody, you can take Mr. Potter to the guest quarters.”

--BD--

The next twelve hours were relatively relaxing. Harry enjoyed a nice shower and two full meals prepared by the Alcatraz house-elves in the Spartan guest quarters in the hospital wing. The quarters were usually used for family members visiting dying inmates. Agent Jones had talked the ward administrator into allowing Harry to use the rooms for a short time.

Although he had toured the island as a Muggle tourist, the powerful Notice-Me Not Charms and other wards prevented him from noticing the magical prison. Even when the island operated as a Muggle prison, it included a special cell-block for the worst of the violent magical criminals. Rather than the Dementors of Azkaban the Americans used Night Mares. These pitch black equines roamed the prison at will. They felt completely solid but could walk right through the walls. The Mares somehow caused the prisoners to experience constant nightmares where they relived their crimes through the victims' eyes and felt the victim's pain. A truly innocent man would never be bothered by the Night Mares.

The Mares were rather friendly when Harry approached them. Remembering Buckbeak, Harry treated them with respect and the four Mares in the group he had approached were more than happy to allow Harry to brush them with his hand. At least until the Night Stallion arrived and called his ladies away.

“Still have a way with the ladies, eh laddie?” Moody commented with a grunt.

The existence of the magical prison was the source of the various ghost stories and other odd happenings that gave the Rock its reputation even decades after it closed. Harry actually enjoyed his behind the scenes tour of the magical Alcatraz. Moody had been to the island several times during his career during joint investigations with the FBMI. During their tour, Harry quietly briefed his former teacher and student on everything Harry knew on the events in England and Cresswell.

--BD--

It was early in the evening when Agent Jones arrived to tell Harry and Moody that the American Director of the Federal Bureau of Magical Investigation and the chair of the American Wizards Council committee on Law Enforcement and Magical Defence had arrived for a briefing on what was going on in Britain.

The two British wizards had been casually wandering the prison grounds. Harry found the exploration to be highly enjoyable; much better than sitting in his room and wondering what was happening with Fleur and Michele. Maybe if Binns hadn't been such a rubbish teacher, Harry would have enjoyed his History studies much more.

Harry followed Moody and Agent Jones into the conference room for their meeting. Already waiting in the room was a slightly rumpled dressed man with a vague expression on his face. Next to him was a very well dressed wizard wearing a very expensive looking suit and had wavy brown hair. He was projecting an aura of control, power, and arrogance that reminded Harry of Lucius Malfoy. Unfortunately, Harry also recognized the man.

Agent Jones made a polite gesture towards the two wizards. “May I present Mr. Alphonse Di'Meteo, the Director of the Federal Bureau of Magical Investigation, and Councillor Charles Travis of the American Wizards Council.”

As the two British wizards stood, Jones continued, "Gentlemen, you know Master Auror Moody and this is Harry Potter, formerly the British Unspeakable known as the Count."

Di'Meteo's vague expression sharpened as he looked at Harry. "Is this the same man the British Ministry asked for our help in tracking down?"

As Jones started to explain, Harry noticed the shocked expression on Travis's face. The expression changed to a scowl. "You were the one in Gringotts with Collins!" the politician accused over Jones's explanations.

Harry fought to keep the smirk off his face. In a polite tone Harry acknowledged the Councillor's comment. "Yes, I was. I want to thank you for distracting the Black Watch and allowing us to slip out of the bank."

Travis's scowl deepened as he glared at Harry. Di'Meteo turned to his political superior. "You helped a wanted fugitive escape?"

"I didn't know," Travis growled out. "I just pointed those rude Brits to Bihtok's office. The woman and the young girl slipped out. They only said they wanted him at the time! I thought he was just another Pureblood Twig at the time!"

"Please stop using that word," Harry commented mildly. "I dislike it as much as I hate 'Mudblood'."

Travis started to colour at Harry's rebuke. "How dare you call me that-"  
"Harry could see the American wizard was building up to a rant.

"ENOUGH!" Di'Meteo bellowed. "Councillor, I am sure Mr. Potter was making an observation and not calling you by that name. You are aware of the reputation of the Potter Clan, are you not?"

Travis's scowl was replaced by surprise. "You are one of those Potters?" At Harry's nod, a calculating look came to the politician's eyes. The room was silent for a minute before Travis commented, "I

always found Minister Potter-Evans to be a very intelligent and powerful wizard. I never believed the charges the Brits made against him after he left office. Michael Potter was very much like his brother. I have no doubt he would have become Minister eventually also.”

“I also dealt with Ronald and Bellatrix Potter several times in their official capacities,” Di’Meteo added. “Very professional and intelligent Aurors; no way were the charges against them valid.”

Harry felt a sharp stab of pain at the mention of his two murdered sons. Drawing a deep, calming breath, Harry said, “Thank you for that. I am very proud of what all three of my sons achieved in their lives.”

“Your sons?” Travis asked in surprise.

So for the second time Harry started to tell his story along with occasional interjections from Moody. It was not a story he wanted to share, but he needed these people to at least get out of his way. It would take time to escape their custody. He was confident he could escape, but it would take time; time he didn’t have. Harry did keep several key items secret like where the Potters had taken refuge. He was, however, forced to explain Michele’s status and why they were in the United States.

“She is actually part Sasquatch?” an incredulous Di’Meteo asked. “But they won’t talk to us. How would they mate with a human?” That caused another discussion on what they had learnt about Michele’s mother.

Three hours after the meeting started, Di’Meteo turned to Councillor Travis and said, “I am convinced. The story is insane but internally consistent and matches the few independent facts we have on what is occurring in England. Plus Moody vouches for him.”

“I agree,” Travis replied. Finding out who Harry’s family was and something of Harry’s personal history, the arrogant Counsellor had started to treat Harry as an equal. ‘Rather like a Malfoy finding out the stranger came from an old Pureblood family.’



Unaware of Harry's thoughts, Travis turned to Harry and said, "Mr. Potter, we can offer you and the other Potters amnesty and protection while you are inside our borders. We will provide you with any intelligence or logistical support we can without breaking ICW law."

"No tactical support?" Moody asked sharply.

"You know the ICW Treaty of 1971, Moody," Di'Meteo replied sharply. "Hell, Thomas Potter-Evans and Dumbledore helped draft it!"

"For those of us that missed the Seventies, what does the treaty say?" Harry dryly asked.

Moody frowned and answered, "No country can invade another or send any forces into another without the express invitation of the legal government. If they do then the treaty forces all signers to end all trade with the invaders, expel any of their tourists and diplomats immediately, and allows the ICW to conduct operations against the invading country. Basically, if you invade one country you end up taking on the whole bloody world."

"Succinct but essentially correct," Travis allowed. "Until Cresswell comes into the open as a Demonist our hands are tied. The only loop hole in the Treaty states that once a government has fallen to a self-proclaimed Dark Lord, or three quarters of the ICW members agree the government has fallen, can international action take place." Harry noticed the hostility and arrogance he had seen from the Councillor before had dropped away as he shifted into a political tactician mode.

Travis turned to Harry and said, "Minister Potter-Evans came over on an official visit soon after I was first elected. I was a bit of a hot-head then..." Travis paused for a moment before a small smile crossed his face. "Well, more of a hot head then I am now," he allowed.

"I made some comments and challenged Minister Potter-Evans to a 'friendly' duel. After thirty seconds I could tell that he could have destroyed me at any time he wanted to. Instead, he allowed the time to run out and treated me as an honourable opponent. I've never forgotten that. He even gave me some duelling tips afterward.

“I am inviting you to come to my estate for the rest of the time you are in my country. Once you meet your granddaughter and her chaperone, they are free to join you until you leave. Or they can stay here while you return home.”

The last offer particularly appealed to Harry. He did not like the idea of bringing Michele back to the UK while a Dark Lord was hunting them. Maybe a way could be found for the rest of the younger Potters and their friends to come over also. Although he knew Jimmy would argue Harry was a hypocrite to say they were too young to help in the fight. But Harry didn't go back in time to save Ron, Hermione and Ginny in order to see them die fighting against another Dark Lord.

“Thank you, Councillor Travis. I accept.”

--BD--

Harry groaned at his luck as he dropped into the comfortable chair in the guest quarters at Councillor Travis's estate.

Why couldn't things ever be simple? When Harry had accepted Travis's offer, it seemed a logical idea. Staying at the prison was not really an option. Sure, it was an interesting place to visit, but not a very nice place to stay. Travis provided a PortKey to his family's estate. Harry and Moody arrived atop a small, cleared hill overlooking a large, deeply forested area. A large mansion sat just below the rise. Harry identified several expensive looking cars in front of the mansion.

A ward must have warned Travis of Harry's arrival because Harry barely had time to take his bearings before the Councillor had emerged with three people in tow. That's when the Potter 'luck' kicked in.

--BD--

Harry walked down a small bricked path to meet his 'host' and entourage at the base of the hill. “Mr. Potter, Auror Moody, welcome to West Virginia,” Travis started. The politician gestured to an

attractive witch with long black hair standing next to him that looked several years older than Travis. "This is my wife, Patricia." With a gesture he indicated a teenage witch and wizard saying, "My daughter, Cassidy and my son, Derek."

Harry recognized the brown-haired teen wizard from a certain broom shop in St. Louis. Fortunately, the younger wizard could not say the same. Instead he smiled at Harry in the same way a much younger Harry could remember seeing his cousin smile at Vernon's business guests at Number 4.

The girl Harry guessed to be twelve or thirteen, looked to be a blend of both her parents but with curly dirty blonde hair. Harry guessed she was the natural child of her parents rather than adopted like Derek. Although they looked nothing alike, the girl's barely hidden smile and the excitement in her eyes reminded Harry of Michele.

Unaware of Harry's thoughts, Travis continued saying to his family, "Retired Master Auror Moody is a legend in the field of magical law enforcement. Mr. Potter is a former Unspeakable. He was the equivalent of a colonel in our MASS forces." Having heard from Thomas and Albus about the American Magical Special Services units, Harry agreed that was a fair equivalent.

"Welcome to our home," Patricia Travis smiled with a warm contralto voice with a soft accent. "My husband has told me you will be staying here for a few days?"

Remembering the agreed on story, Harry smiled back. "Thank you, Mrs. Travis. I appreciate the invitation for us to stay here until my niece can join me for the trip home."

A concerned expression crossed the witch's face. "I understand you travelled here for some type of rare healing. How is she doing?"

A true expression of worry crossed Harry's face. "I don't know. I could not go with them and the healers would not allow me to join them. I won't find out how successful they are until I go to meet them." A mother's look of concern crossed the woman's face as she nodded sympathetically.

“Well, you are welcome to our home,” Mrs. Travis drawled softly. “Let me show you to your rooms and you can get freshened up for dinner.”

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Dinner was a delicious affair. The Travis elves provided a sampling of a variety of traditional Southern American foods. Harry was tempted to ask for their recipe for something called Louisiana Cajun Gumbo. It was bloody spicy enough to double as a wake-up potion. When Harry commented about it, Patricia Travis smiled and said she was born and raised in a wizarding community hidden in the Louisiana bayous. The dish was a family tradition.

The problem started when Derek Travis tried to impress their British guests with stories of his own prowess with a wand. Having taught students as well as Unspeakable and Auror recruits, Harry understood the boy was trying to establish himself as someone worthy of respect in the older wizards' eyes.

Unfortunately, it had the opposite effect.

Harry honestly attempted to show nothing more than polite attentiveness to the boy's stories of his duelling triumphs at school. Harry had guessed the younger wizard's age wrong. Derek had in fact completed school, finishing second in the Defence program at the Salem Institute.

“I would have finished first, but a lucky shot got me and I fell off the platform,” the spiritual brother of Dudley and Draco asserted.

Moody took a deep draught from his flask whilst Harry made polite sounds of agreement. Unfortunately, young Miss Travis decided to stir things up.

“Why don't you show our guests your training room, Derek?” Cassidy asked innocently. “I'm sure these gentlemen would be very impressed with your skills. I know I am.”

“That sounds like an excellent idea,” the elder Travis said jumping in. “I nice bit of duelling after dinner sounds like it would be fun. Why don’t you go call some of your friends, Derek.” As the boy left, Charles Travis turned to his guests and said, “I assume to such fighters as yourselves this would be a welcome diversion.”

“Dear, are you sure this is a good idea?” Patricia Travis asked in a quiet voice.

“Nonsense, it’s just a friendly exhibition. Derek wants to show off a bit. It’s natural.” He added laughing, “Plus, after that meal, I feel the need to burn off a few calories myself.”

“He just wants to try you out, laddie,” Moody muttered so only Harry could hear. Harry nodded as he watched Cassidy Travis. That the elder Travis wanted to use this opportunity to try out Harry wasn’t really in doubt to the former Unspeakable. The more interesting question was what the Travis daughter’s game was.

--BD--

Harry recognized almost all of Derek’s friends from the incident at the magical mall. Even the wanna-be Bella clone, Krystal was there. Except now instead of a filmy robe, she was wearing tight athletic shorts with a tight form fitting shirt. From the looks the other wizards were giving the young witch, including the elder Travis, the outfit was probably a great distraction advantage during a fight.

The duelling started with the three elder wizards watching and giving commentary on the skills of the younger magicals. Harry had to admit that young Derek did show potential in the duelling pit. His technique wasn’t bad. He simply lacked the polish one gets from the experience of truly fighting in a life or death situation.

“He wouldn’t be bad as an Auror recruit, I reckon,” Moody muttered confirming Harry’s assessment. “I could do something with ‘im. Least, if I could knock the arrogance out.”

Cassidy wandered in while her brother was fighting Krystal. Harry was impressed with the skills the witch displayed. She was the only one operating on Derek's level. And if Harry read the signs right, she was holding back a bit too.

"Derek lost the top spot to Krystal. He claims it was a lucky shot, but I think it was he underestimated her. Derek relies on power rather than finesse. Krys does both."

"So, why did you set this up?" Harry asked curiously.

A small smile of mischief crossed her face. "I have a bit of the Sight. Its not enough to really do anything useful, but just enough to say that if I did something amusing would happen."

Harry recognized the expression completely. "Sweet Merlin, you are not allowed within ten miles of my niece," he groaned. The girl simply giggled. 'I swear all teenage girls are Dark Witches,' Harry swore in his head.

Derek had managed to disarm Krystal and was declared the winner by his father. After congratulating his son, Travis called over to Harry. "Would you care to try a friendly round, Count?"

Harry and Moody exchanged a glance that said, 'Here it comes.' With a silent sigh of resignation Harry put on a smile and nodded his assent. Where the Malfoys and British Purebloods ranked wizards on their family, it was obvious that Travis did it with magical power. If you were powerful enough, then he respected you. The approaches were identical, only the focus was different.

And possibly how far Travis would take it. The Yanks had never developed it to the level of Voldemort and his Death Eaters.

Harry stepped into the duelling ring while absently dropping his original holly wand into his hand. He was watching the way Travis was preparing across the ring. His movements spoke of confidence and power, but also had a formal air to them. It was obvious the other wizard's vision of magical combat was confined to the duelling pit,

rather than the free-for-all of the field. That was not necessarily a weakness as they were in a duelling pit right now.

Harry and the Counsellor bowed to each other in the circle. Harry gripped his wand loosely at his side while Travis assumed an advanced duellist stance.

There was a brief pause as the two opponents studied the other; looking for the first sign of attack.

Swift as a snake, Travis brought his wand down to cast a quick, silent spell that sent a small ball of dark purple energy rocketing towards Harry. Pivoting on one foot, Harry swayed from the curse's path. The movement continued as he dodged the two following spell balls.

"Impressive," Travis muttered.

Travis shifted into high gear throwing everything he had at Harry. The sheer volume and power of the spells was awesome. The American Counsellor easily ranked amongst the most powerful magic wielders Harry had ever faced. Moody couldn't have handled casting all of the spells that rapidly. The observer in Harry placed the man in the same weight class as Bella and Christina. That was impressive company.

But Travis lacked the grace and instinct of those two witches. He was a bull in a china shop to their focused precision.

Suddenly, Harry switched from defence to offense. Where he had been shielding and dodging, he now fired off a few spells.

Travis negligently batted the spells away with a superior smirk on his face. The so-called British Unspeakable hadn't shown him anything impressive. Maybe he really was the weak Twig he'd first taken him for.

Then things went a bit pear shaped.

The first charm was a simple Aguamenti. The water stream hit the shields to puddle at Travis's feet. Following on the heels of a simple

Light charm that mimicked the appearance of a Sponge-Knees Curse was a silently cast 'Meltasic'.

An ancient Celtic charm, Meltasic created a near invisible ribbon of electricity that provides the same level of shock as sticking ones finger into an electrical socket. More an overcharged joy buzzer than a combat spell, it was a favourite of the Weasley twins for pranking.

The water at Travis's feet provided the perfect conduit of the electrical charge. Travis jumped in surprise as he felt the shock running up his legs. He glanced in an instinctual reaction. That was all that Harry needed.

In three steps, Harry closed the distance to pluck the wand out of a surprised Travis's hand. Before he could even blink, a swift kick to the knee left the American Counsellor lying in a pool of water on his own Duelling floor with a British Unspeakable's knee in his chest and his own wand pointed at his face.

"Do you yield?" Harry asked with not a trace of a smile.

Several emotions warred on the defeated wizard's face: anger, humiliation, respect and a bit of fear. After a moment the man nodded in acceptance.

"That was a cheap shot!" Derek protested. "You just got in a lucky hit! He had you on the defensive the whole time!"

Ignoring the comment, Harry stepped back and offered the man a hand up. "That was an impressive display of spellcasting," he offered. It was an attempt to smooth out the politician's pride. It also had the attribute of being true.

Travis looked Harry in the eye looking for a sense of Harry's sincerity. Apparently satisfied, the wizard nodded his acceptance. "Thank you for a most educational duel," he said. "I won't make that mistake again."



“Father, he only used spells a Sixth grader would know!” Derek continued to protest. “He only got off two spells!”

“Three actually,” Harry commented dryly turning to face the boy. “The only three I tried to cast too. Duelling 101, don’t be so wrapped up in what you are doing that you miss what the other guy is doing to you.”

Derek’s face started to cloud up and he started to begin a comment back only to be stopped by his father. “Mr. Potter did nothing either ‘cheap’ nor ‘lucky’, Derek. He showed me he is a fighter rather than a dueller. A dueller fights one opponent at a time with time to rest between bouts. He can afford to throw power-driven spells in an effort to win. A true fighter has to be prepared to continue fighting until either he wins or manages to retreat.

“You have been taught formal duelling. Learning to fight when there are no rules, referees or time-outs is one of the hardest things for FBMI recruits to adapt to. Don’t you agree, Mr. Potter?”

Harry felt himself unwillingly re-evaluating the American politician. He was a pompous arse that was convinced of his own smug superiority based on magical power. But where the man reminded Harry of a Yank Malfoy, he had to admit the man had a competence and willingness to see beyond his own views that the Malfoys lacked. Harry realized he’d been tested in some way and it seemed he had passed.

“ Agreed,” Harry commented. “Breaking new Aurors and Unspeakables of the habit of looking for someone to call penalties or using their environment to their advantage is the first goal of their combat instructor.”

“Eh, they’re all too soft now,” Moody grumbled. “Except for a few of the Hitwizards or the mercenaries the Black Watch has recruited, the Aurors today are more used to dealing with petty thieves and illicit love potions than a true fight.”

“I doubt Ron would have let their training lapse that much,” Harry said, automatically defending his lost son. Then Harry grinned, “Besides, that doesn’t sound too much different then a certain training class I taught all too many years ago, Mad-Eye.” Harry merely grinned at the fierce scowl the retired Auror gave him.

--BD--

The next morning, Harry was getting ready to travel to Washington state to hopefully meet up with a healed Michele and Fleur. To keep attention to the Sasquatches’ area low, he would be travelling via a government supplied Portkey to a small magical enclave outside Minneapolis and then travelling by broom the rest of the way.

Harry was feeling a bit impatient to get underway. After all of the events of the past week, he just wanted to know if the large creatures had been able to help his great-granddaughter. Although it had truly hurt to lose friends and family in all three of the timelines, somehow he thought it would be worse to lose Michele. She was such an innocent.

“I’d end up back in Hagrid’s old shack,” Harry muttered aloud as he tried to shake off the morbid thoughts.

Walking out of his guest room, Harry felt better now that he was moving, even if it was just to breakfast. The halls of the Travis mansion were tasteful rather than flamboyant. It was completely different but in a way it reminded Harry of Potter Manor, or at least how it was before the Black Watch’s assault.

Harry walked into the mansion’s kitchen to see to house-elves dressed in French Maid costumes scurrying around making breakfast. The fact the really hurt Harry’s eyes was that one of the elves was male.

A woman’s laugh caused Harry to open his eyes from trying to blot out the image. Patricia Travis stood against one counter with a coffee mug in her hand laughing at Harry’s reaction to the elves. “You have my eldest son to thank for this little display. He gives them the

costumes for every year for Halloween. Yesterday they were vampires.”

Harry snickered at the thought of Dobby running around dressed as a vampire. ‘Have to keep him away from here,’ he thought. Aloud he asked, “Your eldest son?”

“Bobby is what you call a Squib. He just completed the work for his doctorate in physics and is doing some kind of work on optics for the non-magical government,” Mrs. Travis explained. “He also inherited my father’s twisted sense of humour. Even before he found out he wasn’t magically gifted, he was using the elves to plan little traps for the rest of us.

“You are a father correct?” she asked.

“Three boys and two girls,” Harry confirmed.

“Well, as the father of daughters, you will enjoy this,” she said. Patricia Travis summoned the female elf and muttered some instructions. The elf returned in a moment with a large envelope marked, “Photos, Do Not Bend.”

“Here, take a look.”

Harry took the 11x10 photo and looked at it. It looked like it had been taken from on a broom thirty feet off the ground and pointed straight down. A girl’s figure that looked like Cassidy Travis was holding a boy’s hand and it looked as if they were leaning in for a kiss. A caption at the bottom in bright red ink read, “Big Brother is ALWAYS Watching!”

Harry started to laugh when he realized that the non-magical Travis had used a Muggle spy satellite to catch his sister on a date. ‘My family would love this guy,’ Harry thought. Handing the photo back, he said, “I don’t think Salem would have survived his time.”

Mrs. Travis laughed with Harry. “My father’s cousin is the principal at Salem. I think he’d agree with you on that. Bobby would pop in to visit

him from MIT occasionally. He always came up with some kind of science based prank to leave behind in John's office."

Harry and Mrs. Travis settled into a nice conversation over breakfast. They were soon joined by Councillor Travis, Alastor, and Cassidy. The young Miss Travis was not pleased her mother had shown Harry her photo.

"Just keeping you humble, dear," her unrepentant mother replied.

Charles Travis simply gave Harry a look of helpless exasperation that all fathers and husbands around the world would have recognized. Then he merely shrugged and helped himself to more waffles. Attempting to divert the impending mother-daughter conflict, he asked, "What time do you leave to meet your niece?"

Travis knew exactly when Harry's Portkey was timed to go, but in the interest of male solidarity, he answered anyway. "10:30. With the time difference, I could wait until after lunch but I want to make sure its is safe before they are due to arrive."

"Will you be back tonight?" Patricia Travis asked.

Harry let out a deep breath of air. "Merlin, I hope so. If they aren't there today, I have to keep going back at noon each day. I would camp out there but I don't want to get tracked and have them hit us there again."

"Well, I will have the elves prepare a good dinner in either case," the witch assured him. "And if you are able to bring your young ladies back, we will make it extra special."

Harry thanked the Travis's and excused himself after breakfast to start his journey. It was much too early, but he was anxious to get started. As a very experienced Unspeakable, Harry knew it was not good to get like this before a mission, but the family element and the conditions he had left Michele and Fleur under were eating at his nerves.

The first leg went smoothly enough. The Minneapolis village was a bit larger than Hogsmeade so the arrival of a single traveller failed to raise any curiosity. Harry casually strolled through several of the shops in a seemingly idle window shopping. Once he was sure he was not being followed, he abruptly turned down a small alley between a pub that advertised an authentic Irish environment and a cauldron maker. Checking for tracking charms and not finding any, Harry pulled his shrunken Blackbird from a pocket. A moment later, Harry was simply a fast moving speck in the distance.

--BD--

Harry landed in a small clearing not too far from where he and the girls had camped what seemed weeks ago. Pausing only to replace the broom into his pocket, Harry changed over into his wolf form.

The wolf sniffed the air, seeking the scents of Michele and Fleur. He caught the smells he could now identify as Sasquatch but they were faint, not very recent.

The wolf circled the area several times in a tightening spiral around the former campsite. After a carefully patrol even Moody would have agreed was paranoid enough, Harry felt it was safe enough to return to human form.

At the edge of the former campsite, Harry made the transformation from wolf to human. He drew both wands immediately. Keeping one hand for defence, Harry started casting protection, detection and warding charms around the clearing. The wards he keyed to himself, Fleur and Michele, although he kept the proximity charms keyed only to himself, just in case.

Harry conjured a small camp stool and a cup of hot tea to ward off the mountain air that was still slightly chilly even in the spring. Then he settled in to wait.

After two hours of waiting, Harry felt a trill as the outer proximity wards alerted him to movement. A wandering bear had set them off an hour before so Harry was cautious in his optimism. Then, before the first ward had even settled, the middle proximity ward screamed

out its warning to Harry's magical senses. Whatever it was, it was moving fast straight towards him and the wards were not doing anything to stop it. Harry stood up and drew both wands as he kicked the stool out of the clearing. If it was one of Cresswell's demons, he would want plenty of room to fight. Harry started casting special protection charms that blocked demonic power to serve as a buffer zone and keep him out of physical reach for as long as they lasted.

The inner proximity alarms had just started to ring when a huge, black nightmare of a creature flashed out of the woods in a dead sprint straight at Harry. His brain barely had time to register as the creature leapt clear over the anti-demon wards to smash directly into Harry.

Harry felt like a rag doll as the creature rolled on top of Harry. The creature's jaws were only inches away from Harry's neck as it made odd growling noises as it held Harry flat on his back.. Pulling his mind out of shock, Harry started to change into his wolf form in order to fight his way free.

Suddenly, the creature was gone and Harry drew in a breath of air as the crushing weight of the beast disappeared. It took a moment for him to realize that not all of the weight had disappeared.

Looking down his chest, Harry found himself looking into the big dark, almond shaped eyes framed by long thick black hair. "Oh, Gramps! I missed you!" the twelve year-old gushed as she hugged him.

--BD--

It took an hour for Harry to overcome his shock at Michele's bizarre arrival and the results of the Sasquatch ritual. The laughing songs of Fawkes and the newly introduced Brigid added to Harry's confusion as Michele explained how the new phoenix had bonded with her before the ceremony. Harry shot Fawkes a dirty look as his old friend made some snickering chirps from his nearby branch at Harry's confusion.

Fleur arrived five minutes after Michele completely out of breath from trying to catch up with her overexcited charge. "I'm sorry, Harry," a

winded Fleur apologized. "I tried to keep her with me. Tell me she didn't scare you too badly with that form of hers."

"She scared the bloody piss out of me," Harry growled back while mock glaring at the young witch.

"Literally, I think," Michele giggled.

"The first morning I woke up with her fangs an inch from my nose. I screamed so loud I woke half the village." Then she gestured at the two avian watchers. "And those two seem to think it is great fun to watch."

"Really?" Harry asked as he looked over to Fawkes. "Well, I know who got Albus on his lemon drop habit and I just won't give him any from the bag I have in my pocket then." The horrified look on Fawkes's face sent the three humans into around of laughter.

It was with a great sense of relief as the three humans and two phoenixes set off from the ground. As the five flew off in the direction of the Travis mansion, Harry was amazed at the ability of the magical birds to keep pace with the high speed brooms.

With his senses still alert for any signs of threat, Harry started to think about the next stage. They had succeeded in curing Michele, kind of. But now he had to return to Britain to face Cresswell. The news coming out of England could not be trusted. Harry had to get back to his family and stop the new Dark Lord from destroying all of Britain and unleashing the demons.

But why did he fear that getting Michele and Fleur to remain in the States would be his most hazardous task?

## Chapter 18 – Returning Home

21 July 1999

Harry soon realized his fear was completely genuine.

“You think leaving me with Cousin Robert in Canada or here will be safer, Gramps?” Michele asked in a disbelieving voice.

The two Potters were standing in a guest suite of the Travis mansion offered to them since they had arrived two days previously. Michele stood glaring up at her great-grandfather; completely indignant at Harry’s announcement that the young witch would be remaining in the States.

Harry glared back. “Michele, it is not safe for you in England and once I get back I am going to send Jimmy and the rest over so you won’t be alone.”

Michele looked even angrier. “How can you say that? You killed a basilisk with a sword when you were only six months older than I am right now! And saved the Philosopher’s Stone when you were only eleven!”

Harry looked like he’d been slapped in the face. He visually grabbed hold of his anger. In a much quieter voice Harry said, “I did that because I had no other choice. And it was stupid of me to throw myself into those situations. I should have died a dozen times.”

He rubbed his face in frustration. “I had no choice but to fight because no adults would help me. You don’t have that excuse.”

“And what would you have done if Professor Dumbledore had sent you away while your family was fighting for their lives? Jimmy, Sally, and I were raised on ‘Harry Potter’ stories. What do you think that Harry Potter would do if you were forced out!”



With those final words, Michele ran from the room and locked herself in the bathroom. Harry winced as the door slammed shut and locked with an audible click.

“She does have a point,” a French accented voice pointed out softly. Harry turned to where Fleur had sat watching the Potters argue. The beautiful French Healer just gave him a small smile as he glared at her. Then with a snort he dropped into a chair next to her.

“I know it,” he admitted. “I had a vision of me sneaking onto a plane with Hermione, Ron and the rest of the Ministry crew following along behind me as soon as she said it. But that doesn’t make it right.”

The pair just sat in silence for a while with Harry staring into space. Fleur was watching Harry. Finally Harry chuckled and looked over at the Healer.

“I used to rant and rave to Albus, or anyone else in earshot, about being blocked out. The summer before my Fifth year they kept me locked up at my relatives’ house. When I finally got out of there, I tore into everyone for keeping information from me. All through my Fifth and Sixth years I screamed about how unfair it was that I was kept out of the fight.” Harry paused to chuckle. “I was a real obnoxious little git.”

Then the humour faded. He added, “I really understand now how Albus felt about being forced to involve me.”

“How was he forced?” Fleur asked curiously. Who could force the great Albus Dumbledore to do anything?

Harry shrugged, “It was the prophecy. I inherited his papers after the war ended. Between my drinking bouts I read how he spent the ten years before I arrived at Hogwarts trying to figure out a way to defeat Voldemort himself and just bring me in to kill him. It wasn’t until after my Second year that he got proof of how Voldemort survived his little ‘accident’. In the end, Albus just couldn’t find a way not to include me. By the time he admitted it to himself, it was almost too late.”

“And now you feel forced to allow the young ones to be involved?”

Harry nodded unhappily. “Michele is right. Who am I to ship them off when their family will all be fighting? Except for Sally and Michele, they are all of age in the Wizarding World.” Harry sighed before grudgingly adding, “And the two girls would be safer in the Chamber with us than here or an artists’ colony.”

A small pop announced the arrival of a Travis family house-elf. “Mistress say dinner is served.” Before Harry could reply, the elf vanished again.

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Harry led Fleur and a smug looking Michele into the dining room of the Travis mansion. Patricia Travis and her daughter Cassidy were already waiting for them. Michele made a beeline over to Cassidy and the two were soon huddled up whispering.

Michele and Cassidy took an immediate liking to each other on the Potters arrival. The two girls were about the same age and just seemed to click. Their bonding was helped by an incident shortly after the Potters arrived on their brooms.

The Potters had landed in the Travis backyard late in the evening. The sun had already set and the Travis family had already finished dinner. Charles Travis, his wife and daughter were on hand to greet them. Derek Travis, however, had gone out with friends and missed hearing the account of Fleur and Michele’s stay with the Sasquatch.

The next morning, Derek Travis stumbled on Michele wandering the halls of his family’s mansion. The young English witch had gotten turned about looking for Cassidy’s room. Derek took it as a perfect opportunity to bring his bullying ways out on the young unknown witch.

The rest of the house was startled out of a quiet morning by shrieks of pure terror. Everyone ran with their wands drawn to the sounds of the screams expecting the worst. Instead they found an innocently smiling Michele standing over a quivering ball of flesh.

The flesh ball looked up and shrieked, "She's a monster! She tried to kill me!"

A harsh frown crossed Charles Travis's face. "What happened here? Young lady, did you attack me son?"

"I didn't touch him!" Michele protested. "He backed me into the wall and glared down at me! So I glared down on him back!"

Harry had no problem picturing the scene and suppressed a snicker. The more relaxed expressions on the other adults' faces indicated they believed her too.

Cassidy started belly laughing from behind the adults and holding her ribs. "He tried to scare you and you went all Howling on him! I want to see the memory!" she forced out through the laughter.

Derek Travis avoided the Potters completely since that event.

--BD--

"I assume young Michele will not be staying with us when you return to England?" Patricia Travis asked as Harry and Fleur approached.

Harry suppressed a grimace. "No, she convinced me to allow her to return with us."

A small smile crossed the witch's face. "I suspected that to be the case. She strikes me as a very determined young lady." Fleur giggled at the mixed look of frustration, pride, and resignation on Harry's face.

Harry was relieved when Charles Travis appeared in the doorway. He was carrying a large manila envelope that was stamped 'URGENT' and 'TOP SECRET'.

"So, young Ms. Potter won?" The smile on his wife's face was enough of a confirmation. He turned to Harry and said, "You lost me a very expensive bet. I expected you, a British Unspeakable, to be able

to hold out for a couple days.” The Councillor’s tone was slightly mocking.

Shrugging, Harry answered, “I was doing okay until she threatened to runaway and make her own way back to Britain. I have no doubt she would do just that.” Now Harry smirked. “It would be in keeping with family tradition. With her own ‘talents’ and Brighid’s assistance, keeping her locked up would be very difficult.

“Besides, how would you have fared in the same fight against your daughter?”

Now Travis smiled. “I agree. That is why I have this.” He handed the envelope to Harry.

“And this is?”

“Three complete sets of fully legal identification complete with driver and apparition licences, birth certificates, and life histories. The best work of the US Witness Protection Program for each of you.

“We set you up as a Major in the US Army, a staff officer of the magical branch of Special Operations, and his family. No one ever pays attention to staff officers moving around. You are set up to fly out of Andrews Air Force Base tomorrow as part of a routine reassignment to Germany. The flight will refuel at RAF Lakenheath where you can slip quietly away. Lakenheath is under the operational control of the US Air Force, so no one will question the arrival of yet another officer with his wife and daughter. Best of all, no British customs to question you.”

Examining the ID’s, Harry read, “Major Robert Cooper. These are very nice.”

“This picture doesn’t look at all like me, “Fleur commented.

“We have Polyjuice for each of you. The hairs came from mostly random Muggles.”

“Mostly random?” Harry asked.

The Travis patriarch smiled. “We sent a pair of trainees out with dozen different personality profiles. They were told to find people that met similar profiles and get hairs from each.”

Harry took another look at his Muggle driver’s licence. He turned a bit green and said, “Robert Cooper is six feet, two inches tall, 190 pounds, black and completely bald. He looks like Kingsley!”

An odd look crossed Fleur’s face. “Do you have a problem being a black man?”

“ Hmm, what?” Harry asked in confusion. His face paled in embarrassment, contrasting with the green already present. “Its... its just that I couldn’t help wondering where they got a hair for the potion off a bald man.”

--BD--

23 July 1999

US Army Major Robert Cooper made his way down the tarmac accompanied by his wife Maria and fifteen year-old daughter Stefanie. Each carried a small duffle bag. The Major also carried a laptop bag over his shoulder. No one paid particular attention to the rather large, well-built man in green BDU’s (battle dress uniform) simply adorned with his name, rank and a should patch for the US Special Operations Command.

Most of the attention was focused on the beautiful woman walking next to him and the cute teenage girl wearing a sundress that smiled at many of the men as they passed. The large man might as well have been under an invisibility cloak.

The air transport was a C-17 cargo plane making a regular flight to Rammstein Air Force Base in Germany. It was not a very comfortable way to fly compared to a civilian airliner, but it had the unbeatable advantage of anonymity which spoke to the Unspeakable in Harry.

The small family climbed aboard after showing their travel authorizations to the crew chief. The young man pointed them to some rather basic seats in the forward portion of the cargo area. Along the outside of the aircraft were small bench seats of four facing into the airplane. Another pair sat in the middle facing out. They were simply a metal frame with canvas fabric stretched between the poles.

“We don’t normally get dependants on board too,” the sergeant commented in an apologetic tone. “We don’t have much in the way of comfort.”

Fleur smiled at the man. “That is okay, sergeant. We will be fine.” Her polyjuiced form was that of a petite black woman with a fine bone structure. Combined with her light French accent, she gave the appearance of coming from a French island. Harry didn’t know if it was her Veela aura or her new form that caused the young sergeant to blush. Either could be the case.

“Thank you, ma’am,” the sergeant responded. He turned to Harry and said, “We are waiting on one more officer and four enlisted men before we take off, sir.”

Harry nodded politely. “Thank you, sergeant.”

The young crew chief moved off, yelling at his assistants to finish securing some pallets they’d rolled up the loading hatch.

Michele claimed the forward seat against the side of the plane and was soon immersed in a book of charms for teen witches, given to her by Cassidy Travis just before they had left. The book was charmed so Muggles would see a normal teen girl magazine. It was further charmed so magical males could only read the cover and nothing else. Fleur assured Harry it was acceptable material, but the hints of a smirk made him wonder.

Harry settled into a seat with Fleur between him and Michele. A wandless Cushioning Charm cast on all three of the seats won him a small smile of gratitude from Fleur.

They did not have to wait long until their fellow passengers arrived. A small man in the blue uniform of an US Air Force major climbed aboard closely followed by three young men and a woman in the uniforms of Air Force enlisted. The major smiled at seeing his fellow 'major' and took the seat directly across from Harry. The four airmen sat in the rows behind the new major.

Before any conversations could take place, the plane was quickly closed up and the engines roared to life. The major shrugged and smiled at Harry as he settled back into his seat. Harry studied the man's uniform briefly. A member of the US magical Special Forces had given Harry a brief run down on US military etiquette, procedures and uniforms. Hopefully, it was enough for Harry not to raise any red flags during the short trip.

Harry noted the man's nametag read 'Lufbery'. With his limited knowledge of the American military and its uniforms, Harry gathered the man was a pilot from the wings on his chest. A patch on the man's shoulder read "94th Fighter Squadron – Hat in the Ring"

As the plane levelled out, the major leaned across the aisle and extended his hand. "I am Raoul Lufbery." Harry noted the man's distinctive French accent.

"Robert Cooper," Harry replied whilst taking the man's hand.

"Are you French, Major Lufbery?" Fleur jumped in curiously.

The man smiled easily as he heard Fleur's accent. He replied in French, "My mother was French, mademoiselle. My father was American. She died when I was very young and I was raised in France by my grandmother. I moved to the States after finishing school. I fell in love with flying and now here I am."

"Why not stay in France and fly there?" Fleur asked.

The major shrugged. "I came here to learn more about my father's country. I found it was a good fit." Major Lufbery looked at Harry and asked, "Get transferred to Europe?"

"Germany," Harry agreed in a resigned voice. "They told me a staff rotation would be good for my career."

Lufbery laughed. "They tried that one on me once. Had me writing books on air to air combat. Got out of that as quick as I could; found a slot as the operations officer in a squadron. Still have to work the office a bit, but I manage to get in the air every day.

"Don't get me wrong," the pilot continued. "Staff and support are essential, but I am a fighter pilot." Harry could understand the man's point. The Ministry officials with their forms and procedures in London drove the Aurors and Unspeakables fighting Grindelwald mad. It was the ages old battle between the fighters and the REMFs as the Muggles called them.

Fleur changed the subject when asking the Air Force major about growing up in France. The two launched into a long conversation in French that Harry was happy to sit back and listen to. Counsellor Travis had provided Harry with some Army handbooks for background information so he could pass as an officer for a time, but a long conversation with a real officer would quickly expose the shallowness of Harry's knowledge.

The conversation died out as the cargo plane made its way across the Atlantic. Without the comforts and speed of a commercial airliner, the flight seemed to take forever.

When the plane eventually landed at RAF Lakenheath, most of the passengers disembarked while the plane waited to get refuelled. Told they had a one hour delay, the enlisted men made a beeline for the nearest food. Fleur took Michele stating they were going in search of the ladies' room.

After they had left, Major Lufbery commented he was going to wander over to visit the offices of some friends that were the local squadron



commanders, but before he left, he lightly grasped Harry's arm. He leaned in and in French said, "Good luck in whatever you are doing my friend."

Lufbery laughed at the expression of surprise on Harry's face. "You hide it well, but your ladies were very nervous as we got closer to England. Plus you never talked about your unit, what you do. So, I say good luck as I expect not to see you again when our flight departs."

Harry stood and watched the major stride away in shock. So much for their cover story. Hopefully not everyone was as perceptive as the Air Force major.

Casually walking across the tarmac, Harry slipped unobserved around the corner of a nearby hanger building. Another five minute walk brought Harry off the base and into the small town just outside. He found Fleur and Michele in their Polyjuiced forms waiting in a small coffee shop. After a few minutes to check for anyone following them, they left the shop and walked into a small alley between the coffee shop and a dressmaker.

As soon as they were out of sight of the street, they disappeared from the alley.

--BD--

"Thank Merlin you are back."

Harry smiled at Tom's comment as the two wizards watched the spontaneous party that erupted with the return of Harry, Michele and Fleur to the Chamber of Secrets. It was well after the dinner hour when they had arrived and most of the Potter clan had already scattered for their various evening pursuits.

Fred and George had been on guard duty when the trio Portkeyed into Harry's old living room. Their arrival almost started a magical battle until the twins recognized the arrivals. The evil geniuses of Gryffindor had been deep into a discussion about a new invention so the unexpected arrival of three people caught them off-guard. Fred

had preceded them out of the vanishing cabinet to prevent a repeat of the event. It almost happened anyway.

Lily had been sitting on a nearby couch reading a Muggle magazine when she saw Michele walk out of the cabinet behind Fred. It was Lily's scream of excitement when they had arrived which brought everyone in residence running with wands drawn. The concern only lasted until they recognized the three travellers. When Michele announced she was 'cured' the party broke out.

"We really needed a reason to celebrate, Dad," Tom continued in a low voice. "The weeks you've been gone have been ... difficult."

"What's been going on?" Harry asked.

"Ever read Orwell's 1984?"

"That bad?"

"They passed a law that every wand had to be registered and they put on the same charm that is on the students' wands; so every spell cast is recorded by the Ministry. It is worth a year in Azkaban to be caught with an unregistered wand and the law gives them the right to check anyone's wand at any time or place."

Harry winced at that. Ironically, it was remarkably similar to a law Madam Bones tried to pass during the fight against Voldemort. "What else?"

"The Floo is heavily monitored. The rumour is if you use it with an unregistered wand it automatically dumps you out at DMLE headquarters. The Ministry has also taken to deploying volunteer 'Block Wardens' to all magical neighbourhoods and alleys. They report any 'suspicious' or 'disloyal' activities to the Black Watch."

"How could they implement so much in such a short time?" Harry asked, a bit shocked at the rapid changes.

Tom gave his father a small smile that lacked any humour. "The Dark Count's attacks have terrorized the average witch and wizard. Someone poisoned the food at the Leaky Cauldron. It was slow acting. Everyone who ate there over a three day period died." Tom seemed to brace himself and then added, "The entire Nott family is gone too."

"WHAT?!" Harry gasped in shock.

In an emotionless voice, Tom told his father the story. The entire Nott family had been gathered for a family dinner on the Sunday after Harry had left the country. Edward Nott, Tom's best friend and Senior Undersecretary, had been presiding as the family patriarch over his wife, two sons, their wives, and six grandchildren.

"The 'Dark Count's forces' had stormed the house, Dad. The entire family was massacred. The house was pillaged and burnt to the ground. All the men were found impaled on stakes in front of the house; the woman and children were burnt to death in the house. The Daily Prophet claims they were still conscious when the flames reached them. The men were magically bonded to the stakes. All they could do was sedate them so they felt nothing while they died." Tom paused and forced himself to swallow. He added, "The reports said the Aurors didn't arrive at the house until seven Monday morning."

Harry felt nauseous. Even with everything he'd seen in the wars against Voldemort and Grindelwald the scene Tom described was particularly gruesome.

"No one made it out?" he asked.

Tom sighed. "Not according to the Prophet. We couldn't get near the place to verify that." A small resigned shrug. "There have been some other attacks as well, but not nearly on that scale or level of brutality."

Harry considered what he'd been told as he and Tom simply stood watching the rest of the clan celebrate Michele's recovery. The young witch was telling the story, only slightly embellished, of the trek

across the United States and meeting the Sasquatches. Fawkes and Brigid arrived on cue for their part of the story. Everyone was well acquainted with Fawkes and excited to see the phoenix return, but the news that Michele had bonded with the new phoenix shocked them.

Harry smiled as he watched their reaction to Michele's new familiar. Then he snickered. 'Wait until they see her alternate form.'

After a few minutes, Harry leant over to his only surviving son and said, "We'll let them blow off some steam tonight. Tomorrow will be soon enough to get into sorting out this bloody mess." Tom nodded his agreement.

--BD--

The next morning the entire population of the Chamber of Secrets gathered in the large common room. The crowd included all of the surviving Potters plus Fred, George, Ginny, Hermione, Christine, Luna Fleur, and Sirius.

Sirius and Mary had arrived while the Harry and company rescued Tom and Bellatrix from the Ministry. The Diagon Alley Gremlin Invasion absorbed too much of the Ministry's resources to keep the watch on Grimmauld Place.

Harry started the meeting with a briefing on exactly what he had found out on the trip to the States. They seemed to enjoy the story until Harry got to the description of what really happened in Golden Gate Park.

Christina was the first to respond. "Dirk Cresswell is my nephew?"

"That is the story he tells at least," Harry confirmed.

Tom looked particularly uncomfortable with the mention of the demon. With the exceptions of Harry and Christina, he was the only one to ever see a real demon. He could still remember the one from Hamburg that his father had fought against. Not to mention,

Grindelwald had given Tom several 'lessons' in demonology during his time at Durmstrang.

Hermione followed right behind her grandmother. "So your return through time is what allowed Grindelwald's spirit to return and possess his own son? Who just happens to be my cousin?" Harry could see she looked a bit green at the news. What was worse: to know your beloved grandmother used to be a Dark witch, or to have a cousin and great-uncle as Dark Lords?

Harry frowned. "Again, that is what he told me. I don't know for sure. In fact, never take what a Dark Lord tells you as the whole truth. They lie worse than a politician. When I faced Voldemort my First year he offered to give me my parents back. He would have, by killing me and sending me to them."

The conversation went on for some time before Tom asked a question that brought the room to silence.

"Did he use Hellfire?"

The room was silent for several moments before Ron asked, "What's Hellfire?"

Despite the situation, Harry couldn't help the small twitch of amusement as Hermione went into 'know-it-all' mode.

"According to Moehlenpah's Book of Spirit Magic," Hermione stated in her best classroom voice, "Hellfire is the focusing of pure Demonic energy. The FiendFyre Curse was an attempt to make a version that did not require contact with the Demonic Planes. Hellfire destroys your soul as well as your body. No counter to it exists."

"Basically true," Tia confirmed. "Except the part about the soul has never been confirmed. Also the caster of Hellfire has much more control of it than the caster of Fiendfyre."

Now Harry did snicker as his daughter, named in honour of his dead best friend, lived up to her namesake by out 'facting' an alternate

version of that dead best friend. Harry paused and realized what he was thinking. Time travel still gave him a headache.

For her part, Hermione was staring at her idol in surprise. "I never read that!"

Tia winked. "Should have come work for me instead."

Bringing them back to topic, Harry answered Tom's question. "No, he didn't use Hellfire. But it would be a mistake to assume he can't. Remember, he wasn't really in San Francisco. It is possible that he couldn't use it in that situation."

"Also, there is a counter to Hellfire," Harry added. He paused a moment and frowned. "Or at least there was."

The room was silent as they all watched Harry sit thinking with his head bowed.

"Harry?" James prompted his quasi son.

Harry looked up as he wiped his eyes. "Sorry, I just realized why Albus was murdered." The room shifted uncomfortably at this. "Albus had the ability to generate a counterforce. Flitwick used to call it Lightfire."

Matching frowns appeared on Tom, Tia, and Hermione's faces. Tom commented for all of them, "I never heard of this."

Harry shrugged. "Albus didn't make an issue of it. I only saw him use it twice. The first time was when Grindelwald sent a force of Dark Soldiers into Britain. Filius and I joined the Aurors fighting them back. Grindelwald almost killed us both in his opening blast of Hellfire. He would have succeeded if Albus hadn't arrived and forced him back."

"I remember hearing about that," Christina confirmed. "It was a diversion so my team and I could sneak into England. Grindelwald later told me it felt like Dumbledore's magic was absorbing his and

weakening his connection to his power.” A couple people looked at her in shock as they truly realized the spritely old lady really had been the lieutenant of the last Dark Lord. Oddly enough, Harry noticed Bellatrix seemed to be the one that had the hardest time dealing with it.

For himself, Harry merely nodded. He knew exactly who and what Christina was and had done. Her insights from inside Grindelwald’s camp would be invaluable. It was no wonder Cresswell had ordered her immediate arrest when the Black Watch moved on the Potters.

“The next time I saw it was in the final fight between Dumbledore and Grindelwald. Jimmy, grab me the Pensieve. It will be easier to simply show you.”

Harry pulled the memories from his head and placed them into the magical bowl. “It was not a pretty sight. Tom, Tia and Hermione, I would like you to see it. I think you are going to be our primary researchers. The rest of you, well, it’s your call.”

Every person in the room stepped forward to see what they were up against.

The observers watched Harry slip out into a destroyed courtyard and take shelter behind the partially destroyed remains of a wall with a much younger looking Professor Flitwick. Beyond the two men was the event they had really come to see.

The two combatants stood ten meters apart in the center of the yard. Neither made any attempt to dodge or use tactics. This was a flat out power struggle. No subtlety involved. Sheets of black flame radiated from Grindelwald’s wand. The Darkness seemed to fill the yard in an unholy light. In some places the Darkness was not as intense; everything seemed to be colored with a disturbing red tinge.

Dumbledore answered this with a narrow beam of intense pure Light. The beam seemed to draw the Darkness into it. The inky red blackness rolled around the beam and crashed against it. The beam of Light stopped just short of the Dark Lord’s wand tip. A small red

and white maelstrom marked the end of the Light's reach. Sparks jumped from the maelstrom to strike out in random directions.

Both wizards were showing the strain of their prolonged duel. Albus's hair seemed to have changed from auburn with a bit of white to all white in just the time of the duel. Only his beard still had large hints of his original hair color. The previously urbane looking Dark Lord was having an even harder time. His hair was gone and his scalp seemed to be hardening up, forming ridges.

"The lighting is what has done all of the damage," the memory Flitwick commented in an excited voice. "It has been most exciting!"

They heard Harry's response, "Filius, you are the perfect Ravenclaw. Rowenna would have been proud of you." There was a slight pause and the memory asked, "Have you ever seen a demon?"

Flitwick started. "No, not many have. Demonology has been banned for centuries. Only a misguided few have attempted it in the last millennium." A small shrug, "Some Muggles play at it but they don't have the ability to actually open a portal."

"Yah, well I ran into a demon this guy's followers raised a year ago. Look at what is happening to his head."

Flitwick glanced over the wall. "Oh my, the power he is channeling is altering his makeup due to the influx of magically negative elements within the magic's force. It will metamorphosis Grindelwald into a being of that plane of energy!"

"Couldn't you just say he's turning into a demon?" they heard James mutter under his breath.

"I did," the Ravenclaw Head of House answered.

"Well, what happens when he changes?"

"I don't know. The negative aspects of delving into Demonology were never an area of interest to me."



The Dark Lord was starting to shake under the strain of the power output and the changes were growing more pronounced. The observers could see small protrusions on his back starting to push against Grindelwald's robes.

"Albert, this cannot last much longer," the memory-Dumbledore suddenly called out. "You must desist from this action at once to save yourself! Please, don't do this! Don't make ME do this!" A note of pleading in the wizard's voice.

Grindelwald answered him in a voice that seemed raw and worn, but held a deep power to it. "I have come too far to turn back now!" The Dark Lord made a throwing motion and a ball of vile blackness flew directly towards Dumbledore. The wizard merely batted it away like an irritating bug.

The observers instinctively ducked with the memories of James and Flitwick as the black ball sailed over their heads and struck the Dark Lord's tower. The entire tower wavered for a moment and seemed to dissolve like so much smoke. In moments no sign it ever existed remained save for the hole in the roof of the school.

Dumbledore called out in a great voice, "This ends now, Albert!" The wizard seemed to push on his magic and the beam of Light closed the gap to the Dark Lord's wand. The maelstrom seemed to quiver a bit just off the tip of his wand but then, just for a moment, the beam entered Grindelwald's wand.

The real Harry now caused the Pensieve to slow its replay of what happened next.

The Dark Lord and the air around him seemed to explode whilst a rift in the dimensional fabric opened behind him. Before the explosion could go anywhere the rift swallowed it up and sealed itself up. Although the replay took several seconds, in real time it occurred in a single heartbeat.

Harry stopped the memory. An instant later their awareness was back in the Chamber. The gathered Potters and their friends all looked

uneasy and shocked by what they had seen. The sole exceptions to that were Tom and Christina. Both of them had known Grindelwald and what he had been capable of doing.

Tom broke the silence. "So do we know what Albus did? Or where he learnt it?"

"You inherited his papers, Tom," James Potter commented, speaking up for the first time. "Would he have left notes or something behind?"

Tia spoke up before her brother could. "I went through everything for Tom after we cleaned out the Headmaster's office. A lot of theoretical material I wouldn't let out to the average witch, but nothing about countering Hellfire."

Sally Potter spoke up from the chair she was sharing with Michele. Brigid sat on the arm of the chair allowing Michele to scratch the phoenix's head. "Well, since we can't ask the professor, we could ask the most likely person to know."

"Who would that be, dear?" Lily asked. "Professor McGonagall maybe?"

"No," Sally answered while pointing to another chair on the far side of the room. "Fawkes. He was there with the professor all the time. And if anyone is going to know about pure Light magic, wouldn't it be a magical creature considered the example of the Light?"

"Midget has a point," Sirius pointed out. "Hey, fire-turkey!" he called out. "Know anything about this Lightfire?"

Fawkes looked up from his perch on the back of a chair. He sang out a little song before taking flight. Fawkes dove down straight at Sirius. The wizard was too surprised to even dodge as the rumoured Light creature dove directly at his chest. Just before he impacted, Fawkes erupted into a ball of fire and disappeared.

Sirius flinched back from the flames as the impact he'd braced for never occurred. He turned to James and said, "I think that bird just gave me a bit of cheek."

"Maybe not gave cheek, Paddy, but he sure got your eyebrows." Fawkes reappeared and settled on the back of Harry's chair while Sirius felt his singed eyebrows.

"Nice, Fawkes," Harry complemented the bird. "But the question is can you help us?"

The immortal firebird let out a trill of song. Harry got the impression Fawkes was both willing to help but also slightly amused.

"So we just sit around and wait until they come up with something?" Jimmy demanded. "People are dying! We have to do something!"

"We are going to do something," Tom assured his young nephew. "I have been thinking about this while we waited down here."

Harry turned a speculative eye on his son. "What did you have in mind?"

Tom stood up and walked over towards the fireplace. He started to pace slowly as he gathered his thoughts. Then he started to talk.

"You all know what I would have become without my father's intervention. I am horrified by everything that man did. Knowing he was a version of me has given me nightmares for years."

Tom paused for a moment. In a quieter voice he continued. "I think we should take a page from his book."

Harry felt rocked back into his chair. "What?"

"Voldemort's terror campaign was meant to do two things. The first was to terrorize people into submission. The other was to make the Ministry appear weak and ineffectual. What I propose is a variation to that approach."

“What are you suggesting?” Harry asked.

“I wasn’t kidding when I suggested Cresswell’s Ministry was taking a page from 1984. They have drastically limited civil rights as a ‘temporary’ measure. It makes sense with the information that Cresswell is possessed with Grindelwald’s spirit. They are following the recipe of Germany in the 30’s and 40’s.

“So, we do the one thing a dictatorship can’t handle. We make them look bad. Make people question what they are hearing from the Ministry.”

“Make them look bad?” James asked in a confused tone.

“Yes. Think about what was done when you broke Bella and me out of the Ministry cells. Diagon Alley still isn’t back to normal and the Ministry moved into a Muggle office building until they can finish drying the lower levels out.

Lily asked, “Won’t that just make them pass more laws? Harsher ones?”

Tom nodded. “Yes. It will,” he admitted with a sigh. “It will be up to us to get our own point of view out to people. When the government covers up events, the witnesses will know what they saw isn’t what was reported. Rumours will spread. Right now we have no credibility with the public. We have to destroy theirs whilst at the same time build up our own. I’ve spent years as a politician. I know what strings to pull to get the public’s attention”

A series of small conversations broke out as people started talking about the plan to their neighbours. Most of the sounds had a positive, hopeful tone to them. Fred, George, Thomas, and Al, Harry’s team, sat quietly looking to their team leader for his thoughts.

For his part, Harry sat quietly as he considered Tom’s proposal. He could see several advantages to the plan, but also a level of naiveté about the risks. Tom raised several good points about Voldemort’s

overall strategy and approach. But that was against a democracy with a very lethargic bureaucratic tail. Most of the Death Eaters could walk freely in public as they were not 'proven' Death Eaters. The Black Watch would not be held by such considerations.

Even if Tom's plan worked completely, it assumed the Aurors and Watchmen would stand aside when the public had enough. Risking everything on the assumption that the house of cards would fall when pushed because of a public uprising was beyond foolish. Even if the commander folded, one 'true believer' with a wand casting a spell at the wrong time could create a free for all; a bloody massacre that could leave hundreds of civilian witches and wizards dead.

"Dad," Tom asked, breaking Harry's thought train. "What do you think?"

Harry took a moment to collect his thoughts. The rest of the room paused to listen. "You have a lot of good ideas there. But you are only really addressing the second part of it, making the Ministry appear ineffective. I think we also need to take the fight to the Aurors and, particularly, the Black Watch. We need to thin their ranks; target Cresswell's main supporters. Without taking out his lieutenants and true believers, Cresswell will be able to ignore your popular pressure."

Christina agreed. "The Count is correct. Grindelwald would have unleashed his Dark Soldiers with orders to kill any resisters." A pause. "I have done it myself in the early days," she added sadly. In a stronger voice, she continued, "If the soldiers failed, there was always the demons."

Tom looked a bit pale at their comments but he accepted them. "So, what do you suggest?"

"We let our strategy dictate our tactics. Until we can confront Cresswell directly, we are just fighting a holding action. We weaken the popular support for Cresswell while targeting his supporters. Worse case is we provoke Cresswell into using his Hellfire or demons against the public, but that would be all we need to bring in the ICW."

Harry pointed at Tom. "You pick the targets. Make it fit the strategy. I'm sure you will get plenty of inputs from this group, but you are the general."

Tom suddenly grinned. "I like general and field commander better the Dark Lord and his Inner Circle flunky. The other 'me' was right in a way; it was inevitable that you would join me."

Harry grimaced at the reminder. "Nah. I just wanted to stick you with the paperwork while I get to play in the field. And if you keep it up, I know where your mum put the pictures of the time you..."

"No!" Tom interrupted with a quick glance at his wife. "I'll be good." Andrea only smiled.

In the end, they agreed on two separate action teams. As the only two true combat veterans, Harry and Christina would each lead a team. The first was made up of Harry and the Unspeakables: Thomas, Al, Fred and George. The second team would include Christina, James, Sirius, Bella, and Lily. As their healers, Katie, Mary and Fleur would stay in the Chamber. Tom was responsible for overall strategy in addition to working with Tia and Hermione on the 'Lightfire' research. Mary volunteered to serve as the potions mistress stating she would have to be making healing potions anyway so she could just make whatever else the needed too. Andrea would be their quartermaster.

The final resistance came from the younger crowd. Jimmy and Ron were the most vocal, but Ginny and Sally were right behind them. "I am older than you were when you beat Voldemort!" Jimmy accused Harry at one point.

"That's true," Harry agreed with a deceptive ease. "Of course, I also trained for it, in an odd way, starting in my First year. You are all, mostly, of age and want to be involved. I respect that. But before you are allowed out of here, you have to train and perform to MY satisfaction." Harry gave them all a stern look. "That is my best offer. We will see what you want to do after you finish training."

The teens still looked rebellious but at least they had gotten an agreement to train them.

Harry turned to their two youngest residents. "Sally and Michele, you are not of age but can still train. If nothing else you'll at least be ahead of your year mates when you return to school. I am sure we can find plenty to do here to keep you involved without putting you in danger."

Michele accepted it easier than Sally. But a simple glance at her parents was enough to prevent Sally from pressing it any further.

Harry smiled slightly at their grudging acceptance. They would have fought their parents or Tom harder, but Harry still carried a 'mythical' air in their minds that held them back.

Tom stood up. "Okay. Let's get to work.

A/N

Many people commented in AD's reviews how much they enjoyed the historical tidbits. Since BD is a 'current time' story, I threw in Major Lufbery as a modern USAF officer. Below are the facts on the real Raoul Lufbery.

Major Raoul Lufbery is an actual historical figure from World War One. The details of his life given in the chapter are true. Born in France to a French mother and an American father and raised by his French grandmother, Lufbery immigrated to the US when he was about 18. He joined the US Army, became a US Citizen and was sent to the Philippines. After his enlistment ended, Lufbery wandered Asia and became the mechanic for a French stunt pilot, Marc Pourpe, a few years before the start of the war. When war broke out, Lufbery joined the French Foreign Legion in order to remain the mechanic for Pourpe.

After Pourpe died in the early days of the war, Lufbery joined the Escadrille américaine, the first squadron of American volunteers to fly for France. The squadron was later called the Lafayette Escadrille in

response to German protests that the unit violated American neutrality at the time. During his time with the Lafayette Escadrille, Lufbery was famous for keeping a lion as the squadron's mascot. (Yes, a real, honest-to-God lion. He named it Whiskey.)

Lufbery became the first American ever to shoot down an enemy plane while flying for France. He also later became America's first ace. (His first kill was 30 July 1916, I cannot find any earlier American victories.) Credited with 17 confirmed kills, his actual victories were much higher but the rules at the time stated that ground forces had to confirm the kill. His actual victories are estimated between 25 and 60. Under the same rules, Manfred von Richthofen, the Red Baron, was credited with 80 kills with an estimate of 40 more 'unconfirmed'.

When the US entered the war in 1918, Lufbery was transferred to the US Army Air Service as a major and assigned as the trainer and senior air officer in the 94th Fighter Squadron for the new recruits coming in from the US. That squadron went on to produce most of the top US aces of the war including the top US ace, Eddie Rickenbacker.

Lufbery died in May 1918 when machine gun fire from a German reconnaissance plane set fire to his aircraft. Either jumping to avoid the fire or thrown from the fighter, Lufbery fell to his death on a metal picket garden fence. (Allied pilots during the war were not issued parachutes.) Major Raoul Lufbery is buried in Paris at the Lafayette Memorial du Parc de Garches.



## Chapter 19 - The Only Thing to Fear

THE MAN WITH THE KILLING EYES,

THE VANQUISHER

AND THE REDEEMER, HAS RETURNED

HIS ARRIVAL MARKS THE START OF DARK'S RISE

THE HOUSE OF THE FOUNDERS WILL FALL TO DARK'S CHILD

THE POLES WILL CHANGE

AS LIGHT BECOMES DARK

AND DARK BECOMES LIGHT

HOPE RIDES ON THE REMNANT OF THE FOUNDERS HOUSE

HOPE DEPENDS ON THE FLOWERING OF FOUNDERS HEIRS

AND THE SOULS OF THE VANQUISHER AND THE VANQUISHED

IF TRIUMPHANT, THE CHILD OF DARK WILL COMPLETE  
DARKNESS'S WORK

28 July 1999

"Hey, Harry. Can I talk to you a minute?"

Harry looked up at the nervous question from a familiar voice. He had been reading through the proposed plans to implement for "Team Count", as dubbed by his younger team members. James and Sirius proclaimed their team "Team Marauder". Both generations of pranksters seemed determined to treat the upcoming plan as a giant prank war.

Harry allowed the team rivalry as a relief from nervous tension. Harry and Christina knew from long experience that new recruits often hid

their nerves behind big talk or jokes. He had seen it with new Unspeakables and with Muggle soldiers during the war. But for now, he was willing to accept the talk. Besides, the creativity of their plans was top-notch.

"What can I do for you, Ron?" Harry asked.

Harry had noticed Ron had seemed to avoid him in the four days since Harry's return. A couple times he found Ron watching him with curious eyes.

Ron sat down in the chair across from Harry. He seemed anxious and could barely sit still.

"Is there a problem?"

Ron's face pinked a moment and then it came out in a rush. "How could you accept me after what I did before? I left you twice, twice! It was bad enough during that Tournament but I did it again before your final fight! I was a complete, jealous git! How do you know I won't do it again?"

The last was said loud enough that a couple of heads popped into the office doorway. Harry noted the concerned looks on Jimmy, Ginny, and Hermione's faces as they glanced in.

After sending a silent privacy charm at the door, Harry sat back and looked at Ron. "You watched my Pensieve memories of the first timeline?" he asked unnecessarily.

Ron nodded with a miserable expression.

Harry suppressed a snicker. He knew Ron wouldn't understand his humour right now.

Finally, Harry said, "Yes, during the first task of that bloody Tournament my best mate turned into a judgemental, jealous prat. But he was fourteen. He got over it and stood by me the rest of the year. And he continued to stand by me, particularly my fifth year

when I was not a ball of sunshine myself. At the end of that year he marched into the Ministry with me without any hesitation.

"Besides, you only saw the key points. I didn't drop the memories of hundreds, or thousands of days we spent in school where that Ron was my strongest supporter. I should have provided the memory of him receiving an owl from Percy saying to drop me and support the Ministry instead."

Ron looked a bit stunned at Harry's response. "But what about during the horcrux hunt?"

"Do you know what was in those damn things? A piece of Voldemort's soul. In no more than eight weeks, the diary was able to take complete control over Ginny. It forced her to open the Chamber of Secrets, kill the roosters and let the basilisk roam free. The ring took Dumbledore's arm and would have killed him if events hadn't caught up to him first. Aside from Voldemort, I was really the only one that could safely handle one of his horcrux; and that was only because of the scar he gave me when he killed my parents.

"Don't you think it a bit odd that the other Ron raided Gringotts with me and then just so happened to turn into a complete git while carrying Hufflepuff's cup? And that he got over it rather quickly after he left it behind?" Harry's voice had risen as he vehemently defended his dead friend's memory. The alternate Ron could only nod in a helpless fashion.

Harry caught himself and took a deep breath, leaning further back in the chair. After a moment, he said, "But you know what Ron? It doesn't matter."

Ron tilted his head to look at Harry in confusion.

"You are not that Ron. My friend I met on the Express is dead. You are not the person I shared so much with for seven years. The question of souls and alternate realities is too deep for me, so I'll stay out of it. But if I can accept Bellatrix, who's alternate killed my godfather and so many others, as my daughter-in-law; and I can accept Tom, who was the Dark Lord responsible for all of it, as my

son, then how can you think that I would treat you any different for the fact your alternate 'betrayed' me once as a fourteen year-old and a second time under influence of a Dark object?"

Ron let out a loud breath. "I guess. It sounds logical when you say it like that, but I got so angry at him- er me,- er ... you know what I mean."

Harry couldn't help his grin. "See, you are the same judgmental, conclusion-jumping Gryffindor prat I knew and loved. He would have been mopping around here the same way."

Ron gave Harry a sour glare ruined by his lips quivering in a suppressed grin. "What can I say? I'm a Weasley. We get our exercise by jumping to conclusions." Harry snickered in response to the old joke that was so true in its description of that family.

Ron gave Harry a curious, but cautious look. "Can I ask you a question?"

"I may not answer, but go ahead."

"How do you deal with it ... all the deaths? I mean, you lost everyone before and with what happened now... How can you not just go crazy with it?"

The question filled Harry with mixed emotions. A part of him was angry that the question was just thrown out there. But it was mitigated with a sliver of humour that no matter what, Ron Weasley still had the emotional depth of a teaspoon.

After several quiet moments, Harry said softly, "I never handled it well when I was in school. Losing Cedric, then Sirius, I was a wreck. After Voldemort fell, I spent the next year pissed out of my mind from the pain of losing everyone else. My wife helped me to deal with it after I took in Tom. The Unspeakables made me go to some training dealing with combat stress and loss during the war. It helped, but mostly experience and maturity allows me to channel my anger rather than crapping over all of you.

Harry bent his head to look up at the ceiling with unseeing eyes. "All bets are off for Black Watch though," he added.

Ron nodded as though he understood what Harry meant. After a couple of uncomfortable minutes, Ron stood up to leave. He paused. "I just want you to know that I won't turn on you this time."

"I know," Harry assured the younger wizard. "Stay by your friends. You need each other." With a small nod, Ron left the office.

Harry remained staring up at the ceiling. 'Merlin, I hate those kinds of conversations,' he thought. 'Usually it was Hermione's job to deal with those.'

Movement on the ceiling gave Harry a welcome distraction from Ron's questions. The ceiling was currently showing the Great Hall. Although it was summer, a number of people were visible organizing and decorating the Great Hall. None of the figures seemed to be professors and their robes were much too colourful for Ministry drones of any type.

Then one figure arrived in the Hall that seemed to be giving directions to the others. This one Harry recognized. A small chuckle escaped from Harry as he made a connection between the figure and the eccentric dress of the other figures.

"Oh, this could be fun."

-BD-

29 July 1999

The stately carriages arrived to carry their cargo from the Apparition point just outside the Hogwarts main gates up the path to the castle. None of the occupants seemed to notice the undead-looking horses that pulled the carriages; even when one took an interest in the long feathers coming out of one witch's hat. An unseen observer may wonder if the small crowd of witches with a scattering of wizards had never seen death or were hardened to the thestrals' appearance.

But the banner just inside the main gate answered the question.

Welcome to the 155th Annual Conference of Seers and Prognosticators!

The unseen observer snorted as he watched odd assortment climb aboard the carriages. Trelawny would be in her glory playing hostess to her 'colleagues of the Inner Eye'.

The carriages were approaching the top of a small hill that passed close to the edge of the Forbidden Forest. The watcher lightly tapped a small pendant saying, "You're on, Padfoot."

Out of the Forest's underbrush emerged a large, black Grim-looking dog. It walked with a deliberate pace as though stalking prey. The large dog stopped as it approached the path the carriages were following, its head tracking their movement.

A shrill scream rang out of the lead carriage. "It's a Grim!"

Chaos erupted in the carriages as the men and women inside reacted to the sure sign of impending death glaring at them. The Grim's eyes seemed to glow; promising sudden, painful deaths to all it saw.

The panic inside the carriages reached a fevered pitch when one witch, braver than her fellow tea leaf readers, glanced out the window. "Its- its gone," Lavender Brown announced in a surprised voice.

Coming alert to the panic still surrounding her, Lavender repeated herself in a much louder tone, "The Grim is gone! We are safe now!"

The words seemed to sink into her five fellow passengers and to the carriages following as they too realized the magical sign of doom was gone.

"Of course we are safe, young witch," one old witch declared even as she righted herself. "Grims only signal death. They don't cause it!" There is no need to panic."

Lavender suppressed her desire to comment on the sudden stink of fear, sweat and urine that suddenly seemed to fill the carriage.

-BD-

The carriages finally reached the entrance to Hogwarts where a beaming Professor Trelawny and a scowling Headmaster Snape stood waiting to greet them.

"You know," Harry heard over the magical wireless, "it would almost be more fun to do nothing and let Snivelous simply deal with these people."

Harry grinned at his father's comment.

"It really goes to prove the new Minister is a Dark Lord when Snape is named Headmaster," James added.

"Thomas, are you ready?" Harry asked bringing them back on topic.

"Yes. They are staying in the guest quarters off the third floor corridor. I'll be ready whenever you want."

"Thanks, Fluffy," Harry quipped. "Sounds rather ironic."

"Now we wait until they move outside after dinner for their stargazing. We'll give them some time to hit the sherry before we make our next move."

-BD-

The sun was low over the lake as the Giant Squid could be seen at the far end playing. A beautiful red tinted sky bathed the ancient castle with a truly magical glow. The small garden was nicely decorated and several tables stood with all manner of house-elf provided goodies.

The assembled seers stood about telling each other in authoritative tones exactly what the passage of the Grim meant. The fact no two pronouncements really agreed was not a factor. They simply agreed

with their esteemed colleagues before presenting their own interpretation.

Professor Sybil Trelawny was truly in her glory. After years of asking first Professor Dumbledore, then Professor Potter-Evans for permission to host the annual event, she had appealed to the greater offices of Minister Cresswell to get approval.

The Minister thought it would be a wonderful way of raising international awareness of the importance of British involvement in the great mystic Arts. The Minister even convinced Headmaster Snape to host the event here at Hogwarts.

And here was everything going wonderfully. It had started off a bit shaky with the appearance of the Grim. The membership had been quite shaken at first, but it had turned into a truly lovely discussion topic.

"Is that a unicorn?" Trelawny heard a witch ask. The Hogwarts professor moved with the crowd to get a better look at the unicorn approaching them.

"It is not a unicorn," Zefrus the Visionary, a great seer hailing from Coney Island, New York declared. "It is just a white horse."

"It is not simply a white horse," Ardalla of Paris rebuked with a scoff. "I can feel the mystic waves coming off the creature from here! Coupled with the Grim's earlier visitation there can be no doubt this is another sign. For it is a pale horse! Death! Death rides a pale horse!" The last bit was screamed at the top of her lungs.

This pronouncement caused a wave of fear to pass through the fortune tellers. Frantic, murmured conversations flashed through the crowd as they watched the horse come closer.

The fear though soon turned into full blown panic.

The panic was caused when a figure appeared on the back of the horse, a figure dressed in long black robes and holding a scythe in its right hand.



-BD-

Feeling his grandfather's weight landing lightly onto his back, Thomas Potter broke into a light trot heading straight towards the crowd of fortune tellers. In what the watching seers could only be called a deliberate manner, the pale steed started to increase his speed. Soon he was in a full charge across Hogwart's lawn; his hooves thundering in the early evening silence.

The large, white stallion suppressed a whiny of humour as the assembled fortune tellers broke into a panicked retreat into the castle. Through his peripheral vision, the animagus known as Mortis could see 'Death's' scythe swing by his head.

The final straw came when a black shape appeared out of the shadows to run just ahead of the charging stallion. The few holdouts amongst the seers gave in when they saw the Grim running ahead of Death.

One of the more dramatic seers called out, "The Grim hunts us for its master!"

By the time Thomas had crossed three quarters of the distance, the last of the seers disappeared behind the thick doors of Hogwarts.

"Not even one spell in defence?" Thomas the horse heard Harry snort in disgust. "Okay, remember the plan. I'll see you at the meeting point." The sudden loss of the weight on his back told Thomas that Harry had returned to his bat form.

Ahead a thick mist started to rise up from the ground. As the horse entered the mist, Thomas quickly changed form with a stumble as the horse's speed carried over to momentum for the much smaller and lighter human form.

"Easy there. I've got you," a voice assured the young wizard out of nowhere.

"That is supposed to make me feel better?" Thomas quipped as a Cushioning Charm gently let him down to the ground. "You pranked me too much growing up, Uncle James."

"Who me?" James asked innocently. "Here take Harry's cloak and let's get out of here. Don't forget to charm your feet so you don't leave tracks."

"How could I forget? It was the first charm you ever taught me so I could prank Aunt Lily for you."

-BD-

After the second sighting of a death omen in the eight hours since their arrival, the gathered seers, prophets and prognosticators were understandably spooked. It didn't help that Peeves managed to locate several boxes of WWW product. The American contingent all received Nosebleed Nogurts while the Europeans received Gender-Benders in their tea.

On the whole, everyone's nerves were already shot.

The Aurors arrived to investigate the claims along with a small unit of Black Watch. The Aurors investigated the scene and recorded memories. They found the hoof prints of a large horse or possible a horse-like magical creature such as a hippogriff. The prints seemed to disappear in midstride in the middle of an open field. That definitely pointed to some type of magic at work. With Portkey and Apparition ruled out by the Hogwarts wards, the investigators tried to discover how the horse creature disappeared without a trace.

Meanwhile, the nine wizard Black Watch unit broke up in standard three man teams to search the school and grounds for any sign of 'Dark' wizards. With the well-known Potter clan connection to the school the Minister had ordered them to check for their presence. Each of the three wizard teams consisted of at least one Hogwarts alumni as they searched all the classrooms, dorms, halls, and secret spaces of the sprawling castle.

Of course, Hogwarts wasn't willing to give up all of her secrets to the Ministry's wizards.

-BD-

It was a rather shaken group of witches and wizards that were led from the Great Hall by three members of Black Watch. After completing their investigation, the Aurors and remaining Black Watch wizards returned to the Ministry. It was only at the very loud insistence of the conference attendees that the one squad remained.

The Black Watchmen felt like sheepdogs as they tried to move the seers along the halls. Watchman Malcolm Shipwright suppressed a sigh as he watched his former Divination professor proclaiming that the forces of Darkness had retreated in the face of the Ministry. Stupid old bat. Well, at least he could watch Lavender Brown. The witch had been two years behind him in school and he couldn't help but notice the way she was filling her robes.

Shipwright opened the door to the third floor guest suit hallway as his fellow Watchman Avery MacBrooks led the way down the hall. His attention was on the coyly seductive smile on the former Gryffindor witch's mouth when all hell seemed to break loose.

Shipwright fought his way through the terrified mass of fortune tellers. Those they had not already fled back down the hall were huddled against the wall in shock and panic. And the young wizard couldn't blame them as he felt the shock shutting down his brain.

MacBrooks was suspended three feet above the ground. His arms were held in place by the left and right heads of a massive three-headed dog. The two heads were pulling and tugging on the screaming wizard's arms in a bizarre tug-of-war. The middle head was trying to bite MacBrooks' head but the actions of the other two heads perversely seemed to be saving him.

But it was the figure standing calmly next to the huge canine that truly shocked him.

It stood like a man of middling height in a coarse black robe that was tattered with burn marks. The figure's hood was up but not pulled low so that his face should have been clear in the well lit hall.

The key word was 'should'.

Where the man's head should have been was completely empty except for a pair of glowing orbs where the eyes should have been. No distortions to mark disillusionment-type spells could be seen. Just the empty hood and the glowing coals that seemed to simply hover in place.

The figure raised an empty sleeve and pointed towards where Professor Trelawney and Ardalla of Paris huddled together on the floor. In a voice that sounded like boulders scrapping together, the figure spoke.

"I bring a message to you, Seers of the Unseen Realms. You have invited the Darkness into your House, rejecting the Light. As the Light is forced into the dark, and Darkness walks in the light, it will be the people of Britain that will carry the cost as the wrongs are righted. Heed my warning, Speakers of Albion."

Shipwright managed to shake off the shock enough to pull his wand. "Hold in the name of the Black Watch!"

The figure seemed to turn its head in the Watchman's direction. "Beware, hunter. Lest you find you are the very thing yea claim to hunt!"

Before Shipwright could respond, he felt a darkness closing in as he started to lose consciousness. His last vision was of a pair of glowing red eyes coming closer.

-BD-

"Beware, hunter. Lest you find you are the very thing yea claim to hunt?" James Potter Sr. asked in disbelief a few hours later. "That corny piece of shite is the best you could come up with?" he asked his eldest sort-of son.

"Hey," Harry protested with a grin. "I'll have you know that I got O's on all my homework when I was in the crazy bat's class. Trust me, she'll eat it up."

Lily gave Harry a disapproving frown. "Please tell me you took something more substantive than Divination."

"I was Muggle-raised," Harry defended himself. He pointed across the Chamber to where Jimmy and his friends were sitting. "Ron told me to take it. I didn't know any better," he said while throwing his first friend under the proverbial bus.

"Hey, that wasn't me!" Ron protested as Lily and Hermione turned to glare at the Weasley male.

"Corny or not," Tom interrupted, "it seems to have worked." Harry's son tossed a copy of The Daily Prophet onto the table. "The Prophet is eating it up."

James picked up the paper. Across the top the headline screamed out:

Dark Warnings Given to World Renowned Seers at Hogwarts!

The Ministry warns of increased measures to fight Darkness

Death Rides at Hogwarts!

"I don't know what is worse, the fact that the son of a Marauder used a line like that or the fact it seems to have worked," Prongs commented with a mock frown.

-BD-

It was two days later that Harry saw what was one of the most bizarre sights he ever seen in any timeline.

Tom and Harry were sitting in Salazar's former office when in bound the massive form of a certain werewolf-Sasquatch hybrid. Michele

seemed to find the large and rather terrifying form to be 'cute' in the way of many young girls. So it wasn't her bounding around that caused the two wizards to blink.

It was the blonde-haired, bug-eyed witch riding in a saddle strapped across Michele back that took them by surprise.

"Hello," Luna greeted them. "I was taking Loopy out for a ride and I wanted to check if the Licksprittles had gotten to you."

Harry had to grin. No matter the timeline, Luna was simply Luna. "Looney and Loopy out for a ride? Sounds like to start of a rather silly rhyme"

Luna stared down with her large eyes. "I think that would be wonderful, Harry. Do you think you could recite it for us all at dinner tonight?" Michele let out a barking-laugh of her wolf-sasquatch form.

Harry grinned and gave it up as a bad job. Getting a rise out of Luna was impossible. "What can we do for you ladies today?"

"I needed to talk with you and your son. It is about your tasks," Luna answered while tracking the trail of a dust mite with her eyes. The fact the speck of dust was falling but getting knocked about by air currents in the room made looking at her eyes mildly disturbing. Their movement seemed almost random.

"Our tasks?" Tom asked.

"We all have tasks," Luna confirmed, "but some tasks are more important than others. Professor Dumbledore had his task to defend against Mr. Grindelwald. You each have your tasks too."

Luna turned her gaze on Tom. "You were to be the successor to Dumbledore. But you fell and Voldemort took your place. The chain of champions was broken."

Now she turned and looked up at Harry with an unblinking stare. "Until a stubborn man that had seen all around him turn to ash

committed a desperate act. He threw his soul into the past to correct things as he saw it. He chose to become a champion.

"Magic works in a balance. It is a natural thing and Gaea likes a balance. To balance the intolerance of absolute good, there is the Dark. To balance the twisted chaos of absolute evil, there is the Light. When one of the Light's champions fell to the Dark, it ended a line of Champions. Like the line of Ramses, the line of Merlin was broken. A new line was started; the line of Potter"

Harry and Tom shifted uncomfortably. "We know all of this, Luna," Harry commented softly. "I went back in time to kill Voldemort, but I found my son instead." He was a bit confused about her talk of choosing and lines of champions though. The prophecy marked him. He never chose anything.

"But things didn't turn out the way the new champion intended," Luna continued as though Harry had never spoken. "He won but the victory was hollow. Again he threw himself into the past to correct what he saw as failures.

"He prevented the fall of the last of Merlin's line but at a cost. He assumed the fallen Champion's role. The roles of Champions are two- Defender and Redeemer. Albus Dumbledore was a Redeemer-tied to the Light to carry it into Darkness. Thomas Riddle was meant to be a Defender- to push back the Darkness."

Luna turned sad eyes back to Tom. "Defenders often push back that Darkness because they understand that Darkness in themselves. Tom Riddle knew that Darkness but slipped into its grasp. He was too young when a Dark One pulled him in.

"Then a new Defender stepped in." Luna turned again to Harry. "He defended the last Redeemer in his hour of need. And now it is his role to take up the fallen Defender's role to be Defender for the new Redeemer."

Tom looked down at the little blonde with a stream of tears running from each eye. He felt a profound sense of failure at her words. Tom

always knew the young witch was a bit off from her classmates but something inside told him her words were true.

"I was supposed to push off Grindelwald's influence and protect Albus as he fought the Demon Lord, Dad," Tom said in a hushed, pained voice. "I couldn't but you did. And it sounds like another version of you chose to do the same thing to stop Voldemort."

Harry could only nod weakly at Tom's comment. He was just as shaken as Tom. If he followed Luna's words, never a sure thing, it seemed he had travelled in time twice. He chose to do it. All those years of asking why he was the one marked by prophecy and Voldemort came down to a simple answer.

Because he chose it.

"Who is the new Redeemer?" Harry choked out.

Before Luna answered, Tom whispered. "Michele?" The question was asked in a combination of fear and shock.

Harry looked over at his great-granddaughter that had returned to her cute, normal human form. Brigid the phoenix had settled on the almost thirteen year old witch. The girl looked scared but Harry recognized the determination in her eyes.

"Luna, don't do this," Harry begged.

Luna looked ready to cry as she looked up at Harry. "I didn't do this, Harry. I just recognized it for what was supposed to be. The signs were there. In the end, a Defender cannot stand against a Demon Lord. Fate needed a Redeemer. She chose the only one who could fill the role."

Harry looked sick. "So it's my fault?" Luna's slap to the back of the Count's head took him by surprise. He couldn't remember the girl hitting anyone before.

"Don't be stupid. I said Fate chose her. If Fate's original plan had played out it would have been another, but that is not your fault. The



Founder of each line of Champions places their own mark on who is chosen. The Champions are not usually linked by blood, they are usually linked by ... call it attitude. The line of Ramses tended to be great warrior kings or warlords- or at least had the noble bearing of a king; while the line of Merlin was more subtle and focused on knowledge."

"And what would my line be known for?" Harry asked with a wan attempt at humour.

Luna gave Harry an odd look and cocked her head to the side. Then she smiled. "I'd say sheer bloody-minded determination to do what you see is right, damn the consequences along with a truly good heart. At least if the wrackpurts don't get you."

"Yes, those wrackspurts are dangerous," Harry agreed.

"Michele, come here, honey," Tom called. When Michele approached him he gave her a huge hug and asked, "How do you feel about all this?"

"I don't know, Grandfather," Michele admitted as she shrugged in her grandfather's hug. "When Luna started to talk to me yesterday about this it sort of made sense. Professor Dumbledore had Fawkes and now I have Brighid. From your stories only Professor Dumbledore could create the 'Lightfire' to fight Grindelwald's Hellfire. Maybe I can learn to do that too."

'And the hits just keep on coming,' Harry thought as he looked at the pair in shock. Harry always felt that he fought to keep his loved one safe so that did not have to fight. Now he was going to have to protect his great-granddaughter so that she would be able to fight off a Demon Lord. The fate of the world on the shoulders of someone that should be starting the Third year at Hogwarts.

He wanted to punch Fate in the mouth.

-BD-

Dinner that night in the former Chamber of Secrets was an odd affair. The two generations of pranksters were trading stories back and forth, laughing the whole time. The others listened in amusement as they tried to one-up the other side.

It was Christina who was the first to notice the lack of participation by Harry and Tom. Then she noticed Michele quietly eating her dinner where she would normally join right in. Christina's attention caught the awareness of Lily and Andrea. From there it spread to Katie, Tia and Bella. However, it was Fleur that forced the issue.

"Harry, is there something you need to talk about?"

Harry looked at the French woman sitting in the seat next to him with a blink. "I'm sorry, what?"

Fleur smirked slightly as she repeated, "I asked if there was something you needed to talk about?" She gestured with her hand towards Tom across the table. "The two of you have barely said a word since you sat down to dinner."

"We had a slight change in plans today," Harry announced.

"Why?" James asked just ahead of several others. We had good solid plans in place to start attacking Cresswell and his Dark Army."

Harry and Tom shared a glance. Neither liked it but they had agreed to hold Michele's future role as a secret for now. Luna's part would also be concealed. It was not a lack of trust, but simple, brutal practicality. They wanted to keep Michele's role secret for as long as possible from Cresswell. If someone from the family were caught and forced to talk, Michele would become their highest priority target.

Tom started, "Cresswell is starting to get too much support from the international community. His view is the only one out there. Even when we defeat him, we would still have the rest of the world thinking we are Dark."

"Tom is going to be our international face," Harry continued. "His job will be to get the truth out to the governments and their people about

what is really going on here. I would like James and Sirius to go with Tom and Andrea as a protective detail.

"I know Tom is one of the most powerful wizards alive today, but even he needs to sleep," Harry stated as James and Sirius started to object. "And if they rush him with numbers he would be grateful for the help."

There was silence for a moment while the change was digested. Finally, Tia said, "I understand the logic, Dad, but what brought about this change?"

Harry grimaced. He glanced at Christina and said, "We received word today that Cresswell, like his father, is a Demon Lord."

The people around the table looked confused as Christina paled. "A full Demon Lord?" When Harry nodded confirmation, the former Dark Witch said, "Fighting him head on would be a recipe for disaster."

"Why?" Lily asked. "There isn't another prophecy is there?"

"Aside from the one we already know?" Tom asked rhetorically. "No, but being a Demon Lord means that aside from being able to summon demons, he has access to Hellfire. We think that is why Albus was murdered. He was the only known wizard able to conjure the Lightfire that is Hellfire's counter."

"That makes some sense," James allowed. "But if we can't fight him directly, what are we going to do?"

"Two fronts," Tom answered. "The first is to remove his international support. The Americans already know most of it. While they are not popular in the international community, they do have significant clout."

"Meanwhile, those of us here will start whittling down Cresswell's supporters," Harry added.

"And what about my Demon Lord nephew?" Christina asked.

"I am working on that," Harry assured her.

The conversation dragged on for another two hours with not much else being resolved. No one was happy about the change in plans but they accepted Harry and Tom's words that the change was necessary.

-BD-

Harry was sitting on the couch in his office looking up at the roof. Salazar's charmed ceiling was displaying the summer Scottish sky. The moon was near to being full and it illuminated the few puffy clouds. The scene was beautiful and serene; peaceful. In Harry's hand was a large glass of Fire Whiskey.

None of it was doing any good. Harry still felt the pain of what he was going to have to do.

Harry was shocked when he felt a pair of hands slide over his shoulders and starts to rub.

"It is not your fault." Harry recognized the soft French accented voice.

"I always wondered how Albus could just sit back and expect a teenager to fight a Dark Lord and win. Now I am expected to train a pre-teen member of my family to do exactly the same thing." Harry chuckled hollowly. "After being on both sides, I think I prefer being the teenager. At least then you can act out and go all angsty."

Fleur hummed an agreement as she continued to rub Harry's shoulders. "Yes, I've seen the memories of your Fifth year. I am sure many of your professors were drinking each night too."

Harry had to chuckle at that. The image of McGonagall tossing back a shot of Fire Whiskey every night. After several nights drinking with Filius while teaching in the as James Evans, he knew the diminutive Charms Master could more then hold his own in a drinking contest.

"That is better," Fleur commented.

Harry had to smile. "I have to thank you, Fleur. You got pulled into this and it has nothing to do with you. I appreciate it."

"I could no more have turned my back on Michele then you could have turned your back on that little boy being beaten in an alley."

"Tom has been telling stories."

"A few," Fleur agreed. The witch let up on her backrub and moved around the couch to face Harry. She sat down next to Harry close enough that their thighs touched.

Harry was surprised at how close the half-Veela was sitting to him. While they had playfully flirted during the trip across the United States, it had never turned into more than that. Now, Harry noticed the short, silk robe Fleur was wearing. She had worn the robe to dinner too but now feeling the warmth of her bare leg through his, his awareness of the French Healer's attractiveness resurfaced.

"It is not your fault," Fleur was saying unaware of Harry's sudden change of mental direction. "You are not responsible for everything that happens in the world, Harry Potter."

"I know," Harry agreed softly.

Fleur turned and caught Harry's eye. She suddenly leaned in to kiss him softly on the mouth. Harry started to pull away in surprise but her shockingly strong hands came up to hold his head in place. Surprise gave way to acceptance.

After kissing for a couple minutes, Fleur pulled her head back a bit.

"Fleur, I..."

"She would understand."

"How do you know?"

An arched eyebrow and a small grin answered him. "She left her daughters with very explicit instructions."

"What..."

Fleur chose a very effective method of ending the conversation.

-BD-

Luna walked away from the office door with a smug smile on her lips. It was about time something went right.

-BD-

Diagon Alley

The alley was filled with people on the warm Friday afternoon. The London wizarding population was enjoying the sunny summer day with only a few puffy clouds in the sky. With Hogwarts out, students seemed to be everywhere in their little groups. The mood seemed positive. It like there was an unspoken agreement not to allow the problems since the death of Professor Dumbledore to ruin the beautiful day.

Of course there were signs of the times visible in the Alley. Several squads of Black Watch were patrolling looking for any hint of Dark activity. One squad was permanently stationed at the head of Knockturn Alley. They were forcing anyone entering or leaving the alley to show evidence of their business and submit to a scan for Dark materials. Business in that alley was rather slow.

Another squad was stationed outside the home office of WWW. Soon after Harry left for the States, the Black Watch had started to ask a lot of questions about the use of the twins' products in some of the Count's attacks. Coupled with the Weasley family's historical ties to the Potters, this made the twins objects of interest to the Black Watch. The shop and their apartments above remained under continuous surveillance. Knowing this the twins kept to their shop with only open travel to their parents house and a few suppliers. All of the travel was via Floo or by foot. This seeming openness and lack of activity lulled the Watchmen assigned into a level of complacency by the time Harry returned. However, the watchers remained.

Overall, the Alley seemed tranquil; a picture perfect day with all good in the world.

A skilled observer would note the number of glass spheres mounted atop the light poles lining the alley. Every six poles would be a new sphere except where a twist of the alley created a blind spot, and then the pattern was broken. The spheres were part of a monitoring system to allow the Ministry to observe all activity remotely.

'Would have been nice against Voldemort,' just such an observer thought from his vantage point of a roof overhang a few metres taller than the light poles. The poles had been installed after the invasion of the gremlins. Harry bet they could create artificial sunlight to activate the creations self-destruct mechanism.

The sun was low enough to create an artificial dusk. The buildings of London cast long shadows as the magical lights came on. Harry waited a little while and the crowd below started to change and grow. Now the workers were leaving their positions and the alley was filled with people out for dinner or doing some quick shopping before Flooing home.

Harry the bat made a very high frequency squeal that woke his sleeping neighbours. Started out of their slumber, over thirty-thousand bats dropped from their perches to swarm around the Daily Prophet building. Just their sudden appearance was enough to spook the crowds below.

The bats had been collected from caves all along the coast of England and magically transported to this location. Before a compulsion charm caused them to settle in the attic of the wizarding newspaper for the day, an extra charm was added. It had been developed years prior by Tia as a revenge for a prank by her brother Ron. It allowed an object or a creature to take on some of the fear causing aura of a boggart. The more cursed items around you, the greater the effect.

Well, now Diagon Alley had thirty-thousand cursed objects flying around it.

Now the tranquil scene was long gone as witches and wizards ran trying to find a place of safety. They were in no real danger but they didn't know that. Only a few of the Aurors and Watchmen on duty with strong wills or Occlumency training were able to resist. They were struggling valiantly to keep order.

Harry dropped to the ground and transformed unnoticed. He moved unnoticed into the central square that hosted many of the Ministry's public announcements and celebrations. Harry cast a couple of quick spells before blending back into the crowd. The panicked mob overwhelmed the Ministry's monitors. Confusion is a wonderful thing.

The next day, Diagon Alley had returned to normal. The bats had all returned to their normal haunts so the Ministry via the Prophet pushed for people to 'not allow the terrorists to run their lives'. Many responded to enjoy another beautiful day on the Alley.

It was twenty-four hours after the bats appeared that Harry's spells took effect. It was subtle. Some people saw a message stating, "Cresswell is the son of Grindelwald." Others saw, "Don't serve the Demon Lord." Or the third message, "When have the Potters ever been Dark?"

It was enough to start some whispers; to start people wondering about what they had been told.

A/N: Sorry for the long hiatus this story has taken. At first I had major writers block and then lost interest in finishing as I got frustrated. The reviews all helped to push me back into it.

I never really stopped writing. I have been playing with some other plots including a HP / Assassin's Creed and a HP / Highlander crossovers. Between the two I have over 100K words written. It is a huge difference to write the whole story rather than one chapter at a time. I will not post either story on FFN until it is complete. (I do have drafts up on my Yahoo site but make no promises that the earlier chapters won't be changed without notice.)



Hope you enjoy this chapter and I promise not to take another year to post chapter 20. (Ten ... eleven months tops.)

Chp20